

Iraq screens reply to coup reports

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq has responded to reports of a July coup attempt against President Saddam Hussein, dismissing them as fabrication and broadcasting a television interview with an officer it said was identified as the leader. An anonymous Iraqi television, in a late-night show called "People's Talk" Sunday, read out a succession of foreign press reports saying a special forces unit had clashed outside Baghdad with a Republican Guard mechanised brigade led by an officer named Sabri Mahmoud. The reports, quoting Iraqi exiles, said variously that Mahmoud had been killed in the clash or executed. "I find this allegation a serious affront to reputation," an officer who identified himself as Colonel Sabri Mahmoud Al Ghurair told viewers. Col. Mahmoud, who said he was commander of an anti-aircraft battery, said that when people told them his name had been linked abroad with reports of a coup attempt he did not believe them. "I thought they were joking," he added. Iraqi newspapers on Monday featured details of the programme, which included an interview with Culture and Information Minister Hamed Yousif Humadi. They did not say whether the elite Republican Guard had ever had a mechanised brigade officer named Sabri Mahmoud. Nor did they comment on the time lag between the reports and the screening of the interview.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political newspaper published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة المنشورة بالانجليزية والرأي

Special edition on Friday

THE JORDAN TIMES is pleased to announce that there will be a special issue of the newspaper on Friday, Sept. 25, on the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's return home following his successful surgery and recuperation abroad. The newspaper will be available for sale on newsstands as usual on that day. Those who wish to place advertisements in the special issue are advised to contact our advertising department at 667171, Ext. 223.

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Palestinian dies in explosion

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian died Monday when a bomb he was allegedly trying to plant at a bus stop near a Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank exploded, the army said. An army statement said that Rezek Nudani, from the village of Lubban Sharqiya south of Nablus, died while apparently attempting to plant the bomb near the Eli settlement. In the occupied Gaza Strip Monday, Israeli troops shot and slightly wounded a Palestinian in Gaza City after he allegedly tried to stab a soldier, the army said. The soldier was not hurt.

Lebanese army to take over Bekaa bases

RASHAYA, Lebanon (R) — Lebanese troops prepared Monday to take over bases in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley used by Kurdish and leftist Turkish guerrillas, security sources said. They said within 48 hours a Lebanese armoured force would enter a camp used by the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) and a nearby camp used by Turkish leftist guerrillas in the Halwa hills, about five kilometres west of the Syrian border. The PKK evacuated its base in the hills in April after Syria told Ankara in April the PKK would be ejected from the Bekaa Valley. The PKK camp near the village of Yanta was the group's main base in the Bekaa, a centre for Lebanese, Palestinian and other guerrilla groups since before Lebanon's civil war began in 1975.

Sweden seeks retrial for 3 jailed in Iraq

STOCKHOLM (R) — Sweden said Monday it was seeking a retrial for three Swedes sentenced to seven years' imprisonment by a Baghdad court for allegedly entering Iraq. Sweden insists that the three men, engineers working for telephone company Ericsson in Kuwait, strayed into Iraq territory accidentally while on an inspection assignment near the Iraqi border. We have instructed our Ambassador Jan Stahl to try to arrange a meeting with the Iraqi foreign minister to appeal against the sentences and seek a new trial," foreign ministry spokeswoman Lisette Lindahl-Owens told Reuters. Sweden has protested strongly to the Iraqi charge of affairs in Stockholm against the sentences handed down Sunday.

Cars set ablaze in Tehran clash

TEHRAN (R) — Dozens of people battled wrecking crews trying to demolish illegal buildings in a poor suburb of Tehran Monday, setting fire to several cars, a witness said. "Clashes started in the morning. The city wants to destroy the buildings and people are resisting. They set fire to several municipal cars and an earth mover," a shopkeeper from the southern district of Yafatabad told Reuters. An official at the municipality's public relations bureau confirmed that "crowds are on the move" in Yafatabad. He said the district mayor had gone to the scene but had no details. "This is nothing new. For some time now we have been dealing with unauthorised buildings according to the law," he said, using the official euphemism for knocking down houses with bulldozers. "Some people pursue illegitimate interests and the city enforces legal regulations, so such incidents naturally occur," he added.

Kuwait, Iran fail to sign accord

KUWAIT (AP) — Iranian Commerce Minister Abdolhossein Vahhaji left Kuwait Monday without signing a letter of understanding with his Kuwaiti counterpart, although both sides pledged further efforts to boost trade. Mr. Vahhaji and Kuwait's minister of commerce and industry, Abdullah Al Jarallah, refused to comment on the discussions. A member of the Iranian delegation said the letter needs future work that might be completed when the Kuwaiti minister visits Tehran at an unspecified date.

Bare French 'yes' brings EC relief, but row simmers

Combined agency dispatches

EUROPEAN LEADERS applauded France's endorsement Sunday of the European unity treaty. "I breathed a sigh of relief," said Italy's prime minister.

But leaders acknowledged the narrow margin of approval by French voters showed many obstacles remain on the road to unity. Even so, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl predicted the vote would give "new impetus" to the drive for closer economic and political ties. He said he was confident the German parliament would ratify the treaty before year's end.

French President Francois Mitterrand, who had staked his prestige on the vote, thanked Maastricht Treaty supporters. "We have just lived through one of the most important days in the history of our country," he said in a nationally broadcast address.

Portuguese Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva said the French referendum result showed

"the will of France to continue to be the mainstay of the construction of Europe."

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos termed the French vote "a historic decision which will be most important for France itself and the continuation of the European integration process."

A French rejection would have torpedoed the accord, which commits the 12 European Community (EC) members to forge closer union.

The treaty, signed by the EC leaders in December, sets the EC states on the road to common foreign and defence policies and, by the end of the decade, a single currency.

With French approval, the EC must focus its attention once again on Denmark, where voters narrowly said "no" to the treaty in a June 2 referendum. Danish Prime Minister Poul Schluter Sunday suggested a renegotiation of the treaty, something his EC colleagues have ruled out.

Mr. Kohl and Mr. Mitterrand arranged a summit on short notice to assess the consequences of the referendum in which their

vision of Europe was rejected by 49 per cent of the voters.

Spokesmen for both leaders said the meeting Tuesday in Paris would deal with need to make the drive towards European union a more open, democratic process.

Throughout Europe, politicians were relieved by that the treaty calling for closer union narrowly won approval in Sunday's referendum. But there was widespread sentiment that the EC should reappraise its plans for forging a unified superpower that could rival the United States and Japan.

The 51.1-per cent majority for the Maastricht Treaty was less than a resounding victory for Mr. Mitterrand, who would have faced pressure to resign if the "no" votes prevailed.

Mr. Kohl said the outcome in the French referendum "clearly shows how many misunderstandings have arisen" about the Maastricht Treaty.

"It is important that all German citizens know that this treaty will not lead to doing away with the identity of Germany, or Italy or France," said Mr. Kohl, who

says he is certain the German parliament will ratify the treaty after it opens debate next month.

Irish voters ratified the treaty June 18, and legislatures in Greece, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal are at various stages in the approval process. Britain's parliament postponed a final vote until after the French referendum.

World financial leaders pressed the United States Monday to raise its interest rates to help quell turbulence on currency markets rocked by a week of uncertainty over European unity.

Leaders gathering for the annual meeting of the 170-nation International Monetary Fund and World Bank were breathing easier after the French narrowly approved the treaty. And currency markets were calm Monday in Europe and Asia.

However, the IMF's policy-making interim committee said more was needed to bring long-term stability. In a communique, it said "key countries need to

(Continued on page 5)

Rabin: Peace with Syria is possible in six months

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told parliament Monday he hoped to make peace with Syria sooner than he first thought, perhaps in less than half a year.

"I didn't expect any miracles and wonders. I said it would take between six months to a year, and I hope that maybe we will succeed in a shorter period of time," Mr. Rabin said.

The prime minister made the statement as his supporters turned aside an effort by right wing lawmakers to hold a full scale parliamentary debate about Mr. Rabin's policies on ending land in the Golan Heights to achieve peace with Syria.

Israel and Syria were to resume negotiations in Washington later Monday. On Sunday, Palestinian officials said the two sides are closer than thought to formally ending their state of war.

Mr. Rabin has suggested Israel would be willing to cede at least part of the Golan Heights in a peace agreement. Syria has demanded the return of the entire plateau, which Israel declared

"annexed" in 1981.

The prime minister dismissed as premature demands to hold a full debate on the negotiations. He said that once he had an understanding with the Syrians, he would present it to parliament for approval.

Opposition lawmakers had called parliament out of summer recess for the third time Monday to voice their protest to his peace policies.

By an uncounted show of hands, parliament sent the debate to the defence and foreign affairs committee where Mr. Rabin is to testify Tuesday in a closed session.

Outside parliament, hundreds of Golan settlers waved Israeli flags and carried placards reading "You don't sell your homeland" and "The Golan today, the Golan tomorrow."

Inside, hawkish legislators charged that Mr. Rabin defrauded voters when he promised in the election campaign that Israel will "not go down" from the strategic plateau.

"If you want to withdraw from the Golan, you must hold new

elections," demanded Benjamin Netanyahu of the right-wing Likud bloc.

Mr. Netanyahu said any treaty based on international peacekeepers in a demilitarised Golan would not be reliable "because here we are not talking about half the oil of the Saudi peninsula."

"The only liquid that will be spilled here is Jewish blood, and this liquid doesn't interest anyone besides us," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Mr. Rabin said the debate was unnecessary now because Syria had not met Israeli conditions for dealing with the land issue — readiness to sign a full peace treaty. "Therefore, I see no reason to respond to all kinds of hypothetical theories," Mr. Rabin said.

Mr. Rabin insisted Syria must commit itself to "full peace" before Israel would discuss returning the Golan Heights.

Syria broke off the 11-month-old U.S.-brokered talks earlier

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UAE to take island feud to international arbitration

DUBAI (Agencies) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) plans to take its dispute over three small but strategic Gulf islands to international arbitration, a senior adviser to the UAE president was quoted Monday as saying.

"The UAE has decided to resolve the dispute on the basis of... international law and by way of international bodies and the United Nations," Mana Said Al Oteiba said in remarks published in the London-based Arabic daily Al Sharq Al Awsat.

He said this was outlined in talks he had in Damascus last week with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, who is mediating in the row triggered by Iran's virtual annexation of the island of Abu Musa.

Dr. Oteiba, adviser to President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, said the UAE had not asked Syria to mediate in the dispute but to make clear to Tehran "the UAE's rejection of Iran's continued occupation of the three islands which are an inseparable part of the UAE."

Control of Abu Musa is shared by Iran and the UAE under an agreement concluded in 1971 when the Shah of Iran invaded two other islands, the Greater and Lesser Tumbs, that belonged to the UAE sheikhdoms of Ras Al Khaimah.

The UAE reiterated its claim to the Tumbs in March when Iran expelled foreigners working for the UAE government in Abu Musa.

Iran cited security concerns for the measure that led to an exodus of islanders unable to cope without electricity, health and education services.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa had talks in Tehran Saturday with President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani amid reports from Gulf diplomats of efforts to find a face-saving formula that would allow Iran to restore the status quo on Abu Musa.

The row has soured relations between Iran and its Gulf Arab neighbours angered by its strong-arm tactics in Abu Musa.

The UAE president was due to have talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Alexandria Monday before going to Damascus for talks with Mr. Assad. He will also visit Saudi Arabia before returning home.

A Tehran newspaper has charged that Syria was too biased to mediate the dispute.

The English-Language Tehran Times expressed surprise in an editorial that Syria, which has sided with the UAE in the dispute, would present itself as a

(Continued on page 5)



Revellers at the French Socialist Party headquarters in Paris celebrate the endorsement of the Maastricht Treaty.

Peace talks resume against backdrop of Arab disappointment so far

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Arab-Israeli peace talks resumed at the State Department on Monday after a three-day break.

Last week's talks ended in disappointment for the Arab parties to talks because no progress was achieved in all tracks and because the gap between the Arab and Israeli stands is still big despite all that was said that a thaw might take place in some tracks.

In the Jordanian-Israeli track, talks last week centred on exchanging queries and proposals on certain articles in the agenda on which no general agreement was reached so far.

The talks dealt with issues related to disarmament, refugees and environment. Jordan reiterated its stands on these issues, particularly its position toward the issues of refugees who fled to Jordan in 1967 and to discuss it separately from the issue of refugees who fled in 1948 in accordance with international resolutions.

Jordanian negotiators will exert every possible effort in the last four sessions of this round to reach a common language with the Israeli side on issues under discussion at the negotiations, particularly those pertaining to reaching an agreement on the agenda.

On the Palestinian track, last week's meetings ended without achieving any progress in talks on arrangements for the transitional period and the interim government.

Israeli leaders Sunday accused the Palestinians of stonewalling the talks. "You have people on the Palestinian delegation and outside the delegation, in principle in Tunis, who are trying to block the negotiations," Interior Minister Aryeh Deri said, describing the Israeli government view of the talks taking place in Washington.

Mr. Deri was speaking to Israel Radio after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin briefed Sunday's cabinet meeting on the peace talks.

Tunis is the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), where delegates Saeb Erekat and Ghassan Khatib are currently consulting with the PLO leadership.

Israeli leaders have complained that the Palestinians were ignoring the "moderation" in their stance since a new, more dovish government was elected in June. Palestinians counter that the atmosphere at the talks has indeed improved, but that so far the Israelis have not made substantive concessions.

The socialist daily Al Hamishmar reported Sunday Israel was offering the Palestinians consultative powers for the first time on foreign affairs and defence issues during the autonomy, although

principal decision-making powers would remain with the Israelis.

The document spelled out for the first time that a Palestinian administrative council to be set up during an interim period of autonomy would be answerable only to its electorate, and not to Israeli authorities, the newspaper said.

Saeb Erekat rejected most of the new Israeli proposals as not going far enough. Al Hamishmar said.

Also Sunday, Israeli right-wing parties consolidated into a "one Israel" movement to lobby for the toppling of Mr. Rabin's government and prevent the relinquishing of territory for peace.

Likud legislator Ariel Sharon, speaking on Israeli Television, said he would lead the battle against territorial compromise "in parliament, in the settlements, in the classrooms, in the workplace, in Israel, outside Israel among diaspora Jewry."

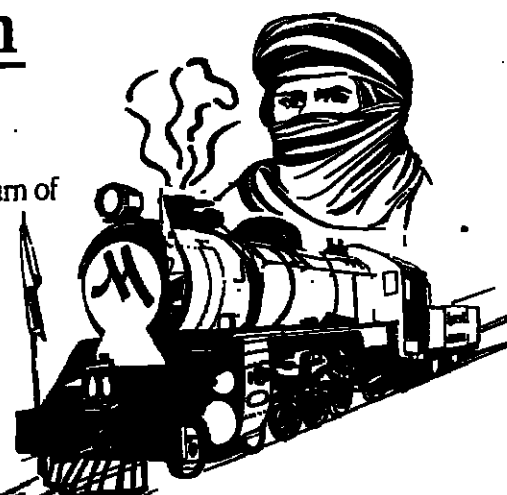
Mr. Rabin told the cabinet that he saw Syria's threatened walk-out from bilateral talks last week as an unsuccessful premeditated attempt to bring about American intervention into the talks, Israel Radio reported.

Israel rejects further American involvement in the talks. "The Syrians had complained last week that the Israelis have not yet outlined an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

MARRIOTT CHARITY TRAIN RIDE

OCTOBER 8th

Due to the nation-wide celebrations on the safe return of His Majesty King Hussein, the Amman Marriott Hotel is postponing its annual charity train ride from September 24 to October the 8th.



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Rabin's tightrope could be fraying

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has been walking a tightrope between nurturing Arab-Israeli peace talks and preventing protests by Jewish settlers in the occupied territories since he took office in July.

Two months into his government's tenure there are signs the rope is beginning to fray. Jewish settlers, at first in disarray over curbs on building in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, say Mr. Rabin's offer this month to trade part of the Golan Heights for peace with Syria has given them a focus. Hundreds demonstrated outside parliament on Monday as Mr. Rabin defended his policy to legislators.

And Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and Jordanians, who began a sixth round of peace talks with Israel in Washington last month on an upbeat, now say Mr. Rabin is the same as his predecessor Yitzhak Shamir, who refused to cede an inch of land.

Mr. Rabin, whose Labour Party favours trading some land for peace, won a June election vowing to accelerate the peace talks while standing tough on Israel's "security."

Mr. Rabin froze building of 6,000 planned housing units in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, halted land allocation, ended mortgage grants in many areas, and told a committee to recommend further benefit cuts.

But he allowed another 11,000 units under construction to be completed and exempted some areas from building restrictions. In the Golan Heights, another 1,700 units are being built. Mr. Rabin said he would not "dry up" existing Jewish settlements.

"There is an attempt to walk a thin line — not to go so far that the settlers will be pushed to mass protest," said Joseph Alpher, deputy head of the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies.

Eran Hayet, spokesman for Israel's Peace Now movement, says Mr. Rabin should not have tried to "play a double game... we think this government has the credibility to take more severe measures (against settlement)."

He said Mr. Rabin's completion of 11,000 homes could add 50,000 Jews to the occupied territories despite expectations that slashing benefits will dis-

courage settlements.

Settlers say far fewer Jews have bought houses since Mr. Rabin took power. From July through Sept. 1 they say only 296 were sold compared to 2,300 in the three months before Mr. Rabin was elected.

"But completing units in the West Bank and Gaza Strip will cause... pressure (to sell them)," Mr. Hayet said.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Government officials say construction continued because of legal obligations to builders. By contract, the government must buy unsold homes and officials do not say what will become of them.

"The Arabs have not been satisfied with Mr. Rabin's statements or his settlement curbs."

Mr. Rabin apparently envisions only minor changes on the Golan frontiers. He backs limited Palestinian self-rule but is opposed to a state.

The impasse caused Syria to warn last week that the peace talks could collapse.

If Arabs are angry at Mr. Rabin for not wanting to return all their land, settlers fear that is exactly what Mr. Rabin intends to do.

Mr. Rabin made clear when seeking election he was ready for "territorial compromise" — at least on the Golan — but he also spoke of protecting existing settlements housing the 115,000 Jews living among 1.75 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"You can't believe and trust him. All you have to do is look to the Golan Heights. He said he'd keep it, then he turns around and says there can be concessions," settler spokesman Bob Lang said.

"I think part of his strategy was divide and conquer. When they divide you sometimes it takes time to regroup," he said.

Mr. Lang said the Golan issue has given settlers a focus and caused many of the 15,000 Israelis on the Golan to support settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As a result, a protest against Mr. Rabin by 30,000 to 40,000 people was being planned for the coming weeks in Tel Aviv, he said.

India to punish chemical firm over sale to Syria

NEW DELHI (R) — The government will prosecute an Indian firm which exported nerve gas chemicals to Syria without authorization, Indian officials said Monday.

"It is seriously embarrassing when your own company violates your laws," a Foreign Ministry official told Reuters. The sale was illegal. It shouldn't go unpunished."

The Bombay-based United Phosphorus Company had contracted to sell 90 tonnes of trimethyl phosphite to Syria in two consignments, the New York Times said on Monday. It said U.S. intelligence officials discovered the second half of the cargo in August aboard a German ship.

The chemical can be used to make pesticides but is also an ingredient for nerve gas.

The newspaper, quoting U.S. administration officials, said the United States had protested to India over the exports to Syria, saying they had undercut Washington's efforts to stem the spread of chemical weapons.

The New York Times said U.S. officials, concluding that the shipment to Syria in July was intended for its chemical weapons programme, alerted German authorities who had the chemicals sent back to India.

Raju Shroff, chairman of United Phosphorus, told Reuters his firm was now trying to sell the 45-tonne cargo to Taiwan.

He said the chemical was still aboard the German Senator, after the ship was unable to offload it in Cyprus in August following the U.S. intelligence tip-off.

Mr. Shroff said he did not where the ship was at present.

Indian customs officials said the trimethyl phosphite cargo was on their banned list and had been exported illegally. "It would be confiscated, that's the first thing we'll do," one said.

The Indian Foreign Ministry official said a sale of dual-use chemicals required authorisation from several government departments.

"We have to seek an end-user certificate and other similar safeguards before a deal is authorised. This one didn't have any clearance at all," said the official, who requested anonymity.

But Mr. Shroff said the official ban on the export of the controversial chemical came only after his company had signed its contract with Syria in July.

"It was not listed as a banned item in April. The rules changed some time in July. Not even customs knew about the rules," Mr. Shroff said.

He said senior government officials were due to meet the heads of Indian chemical manufacturing firms this week to evolve a policy on safe exports.

"India produces cheap and good-quality chemicals which have a big market. I think we need to sit down and discuss how we can do business without offending any law," Mr. Shroff said.

The New York Times said the Indian sale to Syria indicated that Damascus, which already has a sizeable chemical arsenal, was committed to expanding its stocks of poison gas.

It said earlier shipments of Indian chemicals to Iraq and Iran had also caused concern in Washington.

But Indian officials said other countries, including the United States, were illegally exporting chemicals.

"There have been instances of laws being violated by U.S. firms too, despite the best efforts of their government. The Swiss and the Germans have had similar problems in the Middle East," the Foreign Ministry official said.

Iraqi minister predicts post-sanctions boom

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq's finance minister said in an interview published Monday the U.N. trade blockade had helped reduce the country's reliance on oil and predicted a post-sanctions export boom.

Ali al-Husseini Al Khudayri, in comments by the English-language Baghdad Observer, said the Iraqi dinar would one day become a major Middle East currency again and Iraq stood by its officially declared value of \$3.20.

The Finance Ministry, he added, would take measures to enhance the value of the dinar, which has slumped to about 30 to the dollar on the black market.

"As President Saddam Hussein said, oil is part of Iraq's wealth but not all of it," Mr. Khudayri said. "Iraq has acquired expertise, part of it is yet unseen. As soon as the embargo ends or wears out it will start to assert itself."

Iraq, which has the world's second largest proven oil reserves after Saudi Arabia, imported more than 70 per cent of its food before the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Khudayri said the trade blockade, imposed shortly after Iraq's August 1990 invasion of

Kuwait, was helping the country move towards self-sufficiency in agricultural products and in industry and technology.

"Iraq possesses a huge wealth of mineral resources that form the basis for colossal export industries that provide Iraq with a massive foreign exchange surplus in the trade balance."

This, he said, would help the Iraqi dinar "assume a pivotal position among Middle Eastern currencies."

His ministry, he added, was taking measures that "would enhance the Iraqi dinar even under current circumstances."

As part of Iraq's self-sufficiency drive, state newspapers said President Saddam's son-in-law and industry advisor Hussein Kamel Hassan had opened Iraq's first sewing machine factory in Qadissyah department south of Baghdad.

Four versions of the 3,000-stitch-a-minute Farah (happiness) electric sewing machine were on display.

"The sewing machine is the outcome of pure Iraqi knowhow as far as design and manufacture are concerned," the Baghdad Observer said.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Bomb explodes near homes of Yemen officials

SANAA (R) — A bomb exploded Sunday night near the homes of two Yemeni officials in Sanaa, the latest in a recent wave of blasts in the Yemeni capital. The official Al Thawra newspaper Monday quoted a security source as saying the bomb went off near the homes of Kadi Abdul Karim Al Ashi, a member of the presidential council, and Yahya Hussein Al Arshi, minister of state for cabinet affairs. The source did not report any casualties but said the blast shattered the windows of several houses in the area. He said the blast was a "continuation of other incidents that aim at creating an atmosphere of tension in society." A series of explosions and attacks against several senior Yemeni officials, especially those from the formerly Marxist South, have taken place in recent months. The latest was Friday night when a blast went off outside the house of Col. Abdul Mohannad Abdullah Saleh, the brother of President Ali Abdullah Saleh and commander of the central security forces. Another one was close to the home of Abdul Rahman Al Akwa'a, President Saleh's brother-in-law and deputy information minister, Thursday night. Two weeks ago the Yemeni cabinet gave security forces 10 days to track down those behind the attacks. No arrests have been officially announced. Yemen's presidential council, which met three weeks ago to discuss the security situation, accused unnamed "criminal elements" of seeking to destabilise the country's peace and security.

'King of Sahara' to face military court

ALGIERS (R) — Mohammed Barhous, reputed "king of the Sahara," will be tried by an Algerian military tribunal on charges of buying illegal weapons, the official news agency APS said Sunday. The former lorry driver, now said to be a millionaire, will be tried in Blida, a military town, on charges concerning purchases of illegal Kalashnikov rifles and ammunition, the agency said. He was seized at his home in the southern Saharan town of Tamanrasset last June by a para-military gendarmerie commando sent in secrecy from the capital. The operation found warehouses crammed with cash and food, including 200 tonnes of sugar, 300 tonnes of pasta, 250 tonnes of tea and 10,000 litres of olive oil, in a country plagued by shortages. An inquiry into the other goods, said to be contraband, is being carried out in Tamanrasset. Smugglers made fortunes buying Algeria's formerly heavily-subsidised basics and selling them in neighbouring countries.

Iran to host Islamic Chamber of Commerce meeting

NICOSIA (AP) — Five newly independent Muslim former Soviet Central Asian republics have been invited to attend the next general assembly of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce in Tehran, Iran's official news agency said Sunday. Tehran will host the executive committee meeting and the general assembly of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Exchange of Goods on Nov. 16-19, said the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). The chamber of commerce is affiliated with the 43-member Organisation of Islamic Conference. IRNA said Iran had proposed inviting the Muslim former Soviet Central Asian republics to the conference.

U.S. congressman urges wider suffrage in Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — A visiting U.S. congressman, speaking during the campaign for parliamentary elections in Kuwait on Oct. 5, said on Sunday he believed Kuwait would benefit from letting more people vote. "It makes sense not to have a narrow electoral base, whether it's in Kuwait or any other country," Representative John Miller, a Republican from Washington state, told a news conference. "I'm sympathetic to expanding suffrage and I think any nation that has democratic aspirations as Kuwait does should be looking towards expanding suffrage," he added. Only 81,000 votes are registered to cast ballots, out of a population of some 600,000 nationals. The electorate is confined to men aged 21 or over who can trace their roots in Kuwait before 1920. Women cannot vote or stand as candidates. Mr. Miller is taking part in seminars on election issues.

Dolphin mum gives birth — in hospital

TEL AVIV (AP) — The first of six British women who had hoped to give birth among dolphins in the Red Sea delivered a baby boy at an Eilat hospital instead, a doctor said Sunday. The women's delivery plans were cancelled after Israel's health ministry ruled they could not give birth in an unlicensed facility. The women then agreed to deliver in small plastic pools at Eilat's Yotvata hospital. Dr. Elton Lachman, head of Yotvata's obstetrics and gynaecology ward, said the woman gave birth Saturday night with the help of forceps due to the baby's "relatively heavy weight compared to the mother's measurements." Jane McShane, a spokeswoman at Eilat's dolphin reef where the women had been readying for birth, confirmed Michelle Hooper had a baby boy. The women had hoped to deliver by natural childbirth in a glass-walled pool set among dolphins at the reef. Dr. Lachman said that while the plastic pool at the hospital helped ease labour pains, Ms. Hooper's difficulties upheld "one of the considerations of the health ministry... not to allow the birth" at the reef. After six hours of labour, Ms. Hooper received a spinal injection for pain and a few hours later delivered a baby boy by forceps, Dr. Lachman said.

Hepburn says Somalis need more help

MOGADISHU (R) — Actress Audrey Hepburn, the U.N. ambassador for children, said Sunday after seeing famine victims in Somalia that she hoped her visit would bring more recognition of the country's plight. "I was happy to see as many children better nourished than I might have a couple of months ago," Ms. Hepburn told reporters in the capital Mogadishu. "On the other hand I saw babies and children who may not be there tomorrow... I'm very churned up about it. I hope to be a small help to tell those few people out there who still don't know what is happening here." Ms. Hepburn added she hoped to help raise money for the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF). Ms. Hepburn, 62, visited relief feeding camps in the southern port of Kismayo where relief agencies are trying to save the lives of victims of the famine affecting 4.5 million people. Ms. Hepburn also visited Mokono, a new settlement 40 kilometres from Mogadishu, where 1,400 displaced families from different clans, whose feuds have plunged the country into anarchy, are trying to live together and cultivate farms. Ms. Hepburn starred in the films "Breakfast at Tiffany's," "Funny Face," "My Fair Lady" and "Roman Holiday" before retiring to devote time to her family and the United Nations.

Fahd orders speedy reforms

DUBAI (R) — King Fahd has ordered quick implementation of reforms that would give Saudis constitutional guarantees and their first say in running the country that celebrates its 60th anniversary Wednesday.

The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said the monarch on Sunday met senior princes and members of the committee that drafted the "basic law," a kind of constitution that will govern the kingdom alongside the Islamic code.

He ordered the committee chaired by his brother, Interior Minister Prince Nayef, to meet Sunday to start adapting current laws and procedures to the requirements of the new basic law that guarantees some personal freedoms and security from arbitrary search and arrest.

King Fahd "underlined the importance of these measures that are based on Islamic principles" and spoke of the "necessity of implementing them as soon as possible... and adapting existing regulations in line with the basic law," SPA said.

The king also swore in former Justice Minister Sheikh Mohammad Ben Ibrahim Ben Jubair as the first speaker of the 60-member Shura (consultative) council.

The king announced the reforms and the creation of the appointed council and similar provincial assemblies on March 1

but only the speaker has so far been named.

The Shura gives Saudis outside the royal family their first formal say in state affairs since King Fahd's father King Abdul Aziz created the kingdom and named it after his family on Sept. 23, 1932.

He united the disparate tribes of the central Arabian Peninsula by forging alliances with those willing to cooperate with him and forcibly taking over the rest.

The reforms, long sought by liberals in the kingdom, were first promised 20 years ago.

Diplomats say the Gulf war with Iraq that brought hundreds of thousands of Americans and other non-Muslims to Saudi Arabia ended its sense of isolation as a conservative and largely inward-looking Muslim kingdom.

It accelerated the reform process but the country's rulers remain extremely cautious, they said.

The reforms fall far short of Western concepts of democracy and freedom but some see them as an important first step in a gradual modernisation process.

Rumours are rife on who will be appointed to the Shura but even those who repeat them admit they are mere speculation.

Some think that to give it greater credibility, moderates among both liberals and Islamic fundamentalists are likely to be included.

APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE

Bishop Naim Nassar, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Church Council together with the church counsellor and parishoners in Jordan and the West Bank, present their allegiance and loyalty to the Hashemite Throne, and the government of

Prime Minister Sarif Zeid Ben Shaker and appreciation to the minister of interior, the Amman governor and his assistants, the governor of Jerusalem, the director of the Public Security Department and policemen and bishops of local churches in the two banks of Jordan who supported us in our ordeal, helped us to reestablish justice and the church's legitimacy and assisted us to perform mass and religious rites at the Lutheran Church in Um Al Summaq district.

This word of thanks comes from the heart for all people under the reign of

His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and the government.

Algerian leader vows return to democracy

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian head of state Ali Kafi Sunday called for respite from the violence which has shaken the country and promised to work for a return to democracy.

"Our wish is to bring out, from everybody, the sincere will to forge a national consensus giving the country a vital breathing space to emerge from the crisis," he said.

But Mr. Kafi, in his first public address since taking office in July, emphasised there would be no letup in the fight against fundamentalist violence even while the presidency and government worked to lay the basis for a democratic system.

"The determination to ensure security and guarantee peace for our citizens in no way deflects the high council of state (collective presidency) from its desire to bring about favourable conditions for setting up a democratic system."

Last January the Algerian authorities cancelled a general election in which the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) had taken a commanding lead.

Widespread violence erupted, a state of emergency was imposed and the FIS was banned. Since then about 130 members of the security forces have been ambushed and killed.

The authorities imposed maximum security for Mr. Kafi's speech, delivered to officials and reporters at the Club des Pins, a complex on the coast 20 kilometres from the presidency.

Mr. Kafi's predecessor, Mohammed Boudiaf, was assassinated during a public speech in June.

Armoured vehicles of the paramilitary gendarmerie guarded roads to the complex and a warship lay off the coast, 200

metres from where Mr. Kafi spoke.

"Our fight against violence, terrorism, corruption and plundering is nothing other than the defence of Islam and its noble values," he said, referring to fundamentalists demanding an Islamic state and trying to undermine the government's Islamic credentials.

He pledged harsh new laws to combat political violence and corruption but said these would not prevent political activity, freedom of expression or fundamental liberties.

Despite his appeal to all Algerians to join in consensus, he said bluntly: "We refuse all debate with those who persist in terrorism and sabotage or call for murder. The same applies to those who, by their behaviour, statements, or political and financial support, back terrorism."

Speaking of the crisis in the deeply indebted country, Mr. Kafi said the priorities were to guarantee a return to political stability, relaunch the economy and resolve the social problems of unemployment, training, living conditions and public health.

He echoed the promise of austerity ahead contained in a new government programme outlined at the weekend. "The radical solution to the economic problem and a definitive resolution of the debt must come through rigorous austerity and fair division."

"This austerity must be accepted for a limited period so the crisis does not worsen and become insoluble, mortgaging the future of our children."

He gave no date for fresh elections but said a democratic system was the only way to guarantee the people's freedom of choice, protect human rights,

Schwarzkopf says Washington pressed for early land war

NEW YORK (R) — Hawks with John Wayne and Rambo-type mentalities in President George Bush's administration pressed for an early ground offensive during last year's Gulf war, the allied military commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf, asserts in a new book about the conflict.

The U.S. army general criticised Washington civilians who he said tried to advance the date of the land war after Moscow launched a diplomatic effort that would have enabled Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to with-

draw his forces from Kuwait. "The increasing pressure to launch the ground war early was making me crazy," Gen. Schwarzkopf wrote in his book titled "It Doesn't Take a Hero," expected to be published next month.

Excerpts from the book, which was co-written with a professional writer, have been leaked to military officials and were printed in Sunday's New York Times.

Gen. Schwarzkopf, who guided U.S.-led forces that ended Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, did not

name the hawks who angered him, but the New York Times said it was clear he was referring to Brent Scowcroft, Mr. Bush's national security adviser, and Robert Gates, Mr. Scowcroft's deputy who now heads the CIA.

"There had to be a contingent of hawks in Washington who did not want to stop until we'd punished Saddam," wrote Gen. Schwarzkopf.

"We'd been bombing Iraq for more than a month, but that wasn't good enough. These were guys who had seen John Wayne

in 'The Green Berets,' they'd seen Rambo, they'd seen 'Patton' and it was very easy for them to pound their desks and say: 'By God, we've got to go in there... gotta punch that son of a bitch...'"

"Of course, none of them was going to get shot at," wrote Gen. Schwarzkopf.

The New York Times said the general's criticism of the National Security Council and White House hawks challenges the administration's assertion that it took a hands-off approach to the military's conduct of the war.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 25, Aqaba 32. Humidity ranges: Amman 54 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN: Dr. Abdul Majid Al Shaker — 791405 Dr. Riaz Abu Zaid — 894295 Dr. Salim Al Daboli — 776751 Dr. Rami Mawazi — 894788 First pharmacy — 661912 Fawwaz pharmacy — 778336 Al Asema pharmacy — 570325 Nairoki pharmacy — 623672 Al Salem pharmacy — 636730 Yacoub pharmacy — 644945 Shamsi pharmacy — 676660 Najib pharmacy — 894632

EBRU: Dr. Omar Tahsamoni — (—) Al-Sarraf pharmacy — (273825)

ZARQA: Dr. Mahom Hadada — 985750 Rami pharmacy — 985119

KARAK: Dr. Ahmad Mahadia — (—) Ma'nab pharmacy — 352170

SALT: Dr. Abdul Razzaq Essour — (—) Bar'a pharmacy — (—)

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre — 637111 Civil Defence Department — 661111 Civil Defence Immediate Response — 630341 Civil Defence Emergency — 199 Rescue Police — 192, 82111, 637177 Fire Brigade — 891228 Blood Bank — 75121 Highway Police — 843402 Traffic Police — 896390 Public Security Department — 63021 Hotel Complaints — 620800 Price Complaints — 661176 Water and Sewerage — 897467 Amman Municipality — 787111 Complaints — 787111 Telephone Information (directory assistance) — 121 Overseas Calls — 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs: 623101 Abdul Telephone Repairs — 661101 Jordan Television — 773111 Radio Jordan — 774111 Water Authority — 680100 Jordan Electricity Authority — 815615 Electric Power — 636381 RJ Flight Information — 06-53200 Queen Abla Intl. Airport — 06-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN: Human Medical Centre — 813813/32 Khalid Maternity, J. Amn — 644516 Khalid Maternity, J. Amn — 644412 Jaber Amman Maternity — 642362 Mehdi, J. Amman — 636140 Palestine, Shamsi — 6641714 Shamsi Hospital — 669131 University Hospital — 843845 Al-Musaber Hospital — 6672279 The Islamic, Amman — 66612157 Al-Ahli, Amman — 6641646 Italian, Al-Musaber — 7771013 Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf — 77511126 Army, Marja — 891611/15 Queen Abla Hospital — 60224030 Amal Hospital — 674153 ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital — (09)983332

Zarqa National Hospital — (09)900560 The Sina Hospital — (09)96732 Al-Hitam Modern Hospital — (09)99090

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (05)5320-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

17:35	London (RJ)	18:40	Beirut, Rome (AZ)
17:45	Cairo (RJ)	18:45	Cairo (MS)
18:35	Frankfurt (RJ)	19:30	Riyadh (SU)
19:10	Toronto, Montreal (RJ)	21:40	Bucharest (RO)
20:10	Vladivostok (RJ)		
20:20	Moscow (RJ)		

MARKET PRICES

07:00	Beirut (MS)	07:00	Beirut, Rome (AZ)
13:20	Cairo (MS)	18:45	Cairo (MS)
14:10	Riyadh (SU)	19:30	Riyadh (SU)
20:10	Beirut (MS)	21:40	Bucharest (RO)
20:20	Moscow (RJ)		

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

Apple (red)	600 / 520
Banana	300 / 400
Banana (Mekansour)	400 / 450
Beet	400 / 350
Cabbage	150 / 180
Carrot	400 / 350
Cauliflower	200 / 250
Cucumber (large)	120 / 180
Cucumber (small)	80 / 100
Eggplant	200 / 150
Garlic	600 / 500
Lemon	220 / 180

Majali, European team discuss peace process

WASHINGTON (Petra) — Chief Jordanian negotiator at the Middle East Peace talks Abdul Majali met Monday in Washington with a delegation representing the European Union in the presence of several members of the Jordanian negotiating team.

Dr. Majali, who briefed the delegation on the peace process, said the Jordanian team stressed their support for the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and affirmed their opposition to Israeli settlements activities in the occupied Arab territories as illegal.

Jordan, meanwhile, has called on all states of the region, including Israel, to join a treaty regulating the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the area.

Head of the Jordanian delegation to the arms control and security working group meetings Abdullah Touqan demanded that Israel's nuclear facilities be placed under international supervision.

The working group on arms control and security ended its meetings in Moscow on Sept. 17. Mr. Touqan told Jordan Television Monday that the meeting discussed working papers from the U.S., the European Community, India and Russia.

He said delegations to the talks also held a closed meeting to discuss issues related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The Moscow meeting, Mr. Touqan said, also discussed confidence-building measures between Arab countries and Israel and means of controlling the spread of conventional arms in the area.

Mr. Touqan said that there was a "basic connection between the bilateral and multilateral talks and that progress in one would be positively reflected on the other."

Jordan to attend health meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan is taking part in the 17th meeting of the Arab Health Ministers Council due to open at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo at the end of this month.

The meeting is to help bolster cooperation among Arab countries in health services, according to Health Minister Aref Bataineh who will head the Jordanian delegation to the meeting.

Dr. Bataineh said that the health ministers will discuss a pan-Arab strategy on health development, health conditions in the occupied Arab territories, and a pan-Arab fund for health development, among other issues.

The two-day meeting will also discuss means of combating drugs and alcoholism in cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO) in addition to medical cooperation among Arab countries, the minister said.

Dr. Bataineh will also lead a Jordanian delegation to the 38th meeting of a WHO regional committee due to be held in Alexandria following the Arab health ministers meeting in Cairo.

In the five-day Alexandria meeting, participants will discuss an annual WHO report on the health conditions within the Mediterranean zone and other important issues like combating AIDS, Dr. Bataineh said.

He said that the regional meeting will group representatives of Arab countries in addition to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Cyprus.

Syrian minister arrives in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — Syrian Minister of Communications Mohammad Radwan Martini arrived here Monday at the head of an official delegation for a three day visit to Jordan.

The minister is expected to discuss means of further bolstering Jordanian-Syrian cooperation in communications and to sign an agreement on linking Syrian-Jordanian telecommunications networks.

In a statement upon arriving at the border post of Ramtha, Mr. Martini said that his visit was in the course of ongoing efforts to bolster cooperation between Jordan and Syria in various fields.

The talks he said, are a follow-up to those started in Amman last May and are expected to end with the signing of the agreement that would open the way for further facilitating communications between the two neighbouring countries.

Minister of Post and Communications Jamal Sarsireh and other officials were at the Ramtha border post to welcome the Syrian delegation.

Water talks made little headway — delegate says

AMMAN (Petra) — Talks on Middle East water disputes held by an international working group in Washington last week did not reach concrete and practical results, and the substantial issues remain unresolved, head of the Palestinian team to the talks said Monday.

Dr. Riad Al Husari said that the meeting, which was attended by Arab delegations and representatives from Canada, Turkey, the U.S., Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and international organisations discussed mere academic and technical aspects of the water situation in the region but did not delve into substance.

Speaking shortly before returning to the occupied Arab territories, Mr. Husari said that the meeting agreed that Canada conduct a survey of modern technology that could be employed in developing the region's water resources, and that Japan and the European Community (EC) nations conduct feasibility studies on desalinating sea water for the benefit of the countries of the area.

"The meeting did not reach any agreement on regional cooperation in water affairs despite Israel's insistence on such agreement," Mr. Husari said.

For the Palestinians, no progress can be achieved in the question of water or other aspects of the multilateral phase of the peace process unless there is real progress in the bilateral negotiations, he said.

Mr. Husari said that Palestinians insist that they have complete control over Palestinian land with full sovereignty over the surface and underground resources including water.

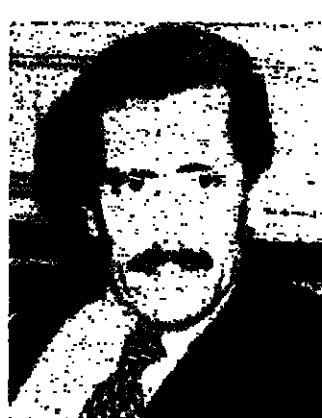
He said the Israeli delegation "seems to be carrying ideas similar to those presented at the earlier meetings."

Mr. Husari said that the Palestinian delegation to the meeting demanded that Israel pay the Palestinians compensation for an estimated 500 million cubic metres of water it "has so far stolen from the occupied West Bank and 20 million cubic metres from the Gaza Strip."

He pointed out that while "stealing the Arab water resources, the Israelis have been rationing water to Palestinians in the occupied territories causing so much damage and losses to the Arab farmlands and the Palestinian economy."

Ensour criticises insurance system

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Industry and Trade Abdullah Ensour Monday opened a one-day seminar on maritime insurance and said that foreign insurance companies were pocketing most of the premiums paid by local businesses and firms and returning very little in compensation for losses.



Abdullah Ensour

Available figures about last year's operations showed that a total of JD10,485,880 were collected in maritime insurance premiums from Jordanian firms, up from JD7,934,517 in 1990.

Dr. Ensour said that out of a total of JD3,746,054 paid in compensation for losses for damaged goods, only JD483,154 actually reached the insured Jordanian firms.

The minister said most of the premiums paid for maritime insurance benefited foreign insurance companies which conduct what is called re-insurance business. Little is left of the Jordanian insurance companies, he said.

Maritime insurance, Dr. Ensour said, remains the cornerstone in international insurance business as most of the goods are transported by sea, the business plays a vital role in the economies of the world, he said.

Insurance activities started in

Jordan in the early 1940s while Jordanian insurance firms emerged in the early 1950s, the minister said at the opening session of the seminar, organised by Jordan's National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the Federation of Jordanian Insurance Companies.

The minister expressed hope that participants in the seminar will reach a decision arranging maritime insurance policies and make arrangements for boosting cooperation among shipping agents to reduce losses resulting in maritime transport.

He also voiced the government's hope that those involved in insurance and shipping businesses will find a way to increase their reliance on container and bulk shipping and that Jordan bound goods be transported on board modern vessel with the aim of reducing losses or damage.

Another key speaker at the seminar was Mr. Mohammad Asfour, chairman of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and head of the national committee, who said that the post-Gulf war era has witnessed numerous commercial and maritime shipping problems.

Jordanian merchants' lack of knowledge about maritime insurance has proven very costly, said Mr. Asfour.

"Jordan papers at the seminar discussed concepts and conditions of maritime insurance in war and peace times."

According to Mr. Asfour, the national committee was planning another seminar to deal with maritime frauds to acquaint Jordanian importers with various maritime shipping risks and insurance operations.

Taking part in the meeting Monday were representatives of various insurance and transport companies.

Arab information ministers voice support for Libya, UAE

CAIRO (Agencies) — Arab ministers of information, who ended a two-day meeting in Cairo Sunday, have earmarked \$35,000 from the budget of the General Secretariat of the Arab League for cultural and media activities in the occupied Arab territories.

The information ministers also decided to set up a new body called "Arab Information Council," and approved its basic internal rules.

The ministers, in their 25th regular session, also approved an Egyptian working paper setting the guidelines for a new Arab information strategy and the establishment of an Arab industry for information equipment.

The planned Arab industry would limit importing such equipment from foreign markets.

They also agreed to form a committee of information experts to study religious terrorism in the Arab countries.

The ministers praised Libya's position in its crisis with the West and declared absolute support for the United Arab Emirates in its dispute with Iran.

Information Minister Mahmoud Al Sharif was quoted by Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying the meeting "achieved a great deal that would bolster Arab cooperation in the information field."

Mr. Sharif, who chaired the meeting held at the Arab League

headquarters, thanked the Arab League Secretary General and the Egyptian Minister of Information Safwat Al Sharif for hosting the conference and "making the meeting successful."

Petra said Mr. Sharif and his Egyptian counterpart held bilateral talks on promoting cooperation in media affairs between Jordan and Egypt. The agency said that the two ministers reviewed current Arab affairs and means of bolstering inter-Arab cooperation in information fields.

Representatives of 21 Arab states and a number of Arab media and information organisations participated in the meeting, the first by Arab information ministers after the Gulf war.

Dubai reopens its markets to Jordan exports

AMMAN (J.T.) — Dubai has resumed its imports of Jordanian agricultural products after a brief hiatus caused by reports that the produce was contaminated, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported from Dubai Monday.

The decision to reopen Dubai markets to Jordanian exports of fruits and vegetables came after laboratory tests conducted on random samples of the produce proved it was free from contamination, Petra quoted the Dubai-based Al Bayan daily as saying.

Petra quoted the daily as saying that the Dubai Municipality has been carrying out daily laboratory tests on imported fruits and vegetables to ensure they were fit for human consumption.

Several Jordanian trucks carrying agricultural exports to the emirate had been temporarily halted at the border to allow for the laboratory tests in the wake of rumours that some of the produce was contaminated, but, according to the paper, the shipment was allowed to be discharged in the markets after it was proven to be safe from any contamination.

Saudi Arabia has for the past 23 days banned shipments of

Jordanian fruits and vegetables from its markets, claiming that traces of dangerous chemicals were found in the produce.

Jordan has repeatedly denied the allegations.

Saudi Arabia, which until the eruption of the Gulf crisis imported 70 per cent of Jordan's annual agricultural exports of around 500,000 tonnes, turned back several vegetables trucks after it said that random tests showed a high level of pollutants.

Agriculture Minister Fayez Khasawneh said there were no traces of pollutants in the shipments and expressed hope Riyadh would soon resume imports.

Ministry of Agriculture officials said that contacts are being maintained at the highest level to persuade Saudi Arabia to change its position.

According to the Dubai daily, the Director of Health at Dubai Municipality Mohammad Said Harib has stressed that the laboratory tests were continuing on a daily basis, and that all fruits and vegetables entering the Dubai market were fit for human consumption.

Khasawneh reaffirms produce not contaminated

AMMAN (J.T.) — Agriculture Minister Fayez Khasawneh Monday reaffirmed that agricultural produce sold in local markets is "safe and fit for human consumption."

Mr. Khasawneh said the contaminated vegetables which the Cabinet ordered destroyed last week constituted a small percentage of the produce of a limited area of land in Khirbet Al Samra near Zarqa.

The minister told Jordan Television that 48 out of 2000 cultivated dunams were affected by the decision.

He said that vegetables like carrots and pepper, which are eaten fresh, will be destroyed because there was a rule against planting them in the area, which is mainly irrigated by water treated at Khirbet Al Samra water treatment plant. He said farmers who ignored that ruling will not be compensated for their losses.

Dr. Khasawneh said the government will compensate farmers for the destruction of crops that were not banned by the ministry. These crops include marrows, eggplants, cawiflowers and cabbages.

The minister said that animal feed and forest trees can be grown around the treatment plant but no more agricultural crops will be allowed there. He assured the public that most of the crops in the market come from other areas in the country where no waste treatment plants exist.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Regent congratulates Mall

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Monday sent a cable to Mali President Amadou Toumani Touré congratulating him on his country's national day. Prince Hassan wished Mr. Touré good health and happiness and the Mali people further progress and prosperity.

Up to host astronomy conference

AMMAN (Petra) — Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, the first Jordanian astronomy conference will be opened at the University of Jordan (UJ) Sept. 26. The three-day conference, which is organised by the Jordanian Astronomy Amateurs Society, in cooperation with the University's Physics Department, will discuss a total of 50 researches in three separate tracks. Chairman of the Physics Department said working papers to be presented at the conference will tackle topics such as the influence of technology on the development of space and astronomy sciences, Islamic heritage and its influence on contemporary sciences.

House committee meets farmers

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament's agriculture committee held a meeting Monday with a delegation representing the northern badia region and the Mafrq Governorate farmers. Committee Chairman Nader Thuheirat said the meeting discussed a memorandum presented by Deputy Mohammad Al Mu'arar on the requirements and needs of farmers in the two areas. Mr. Thuheirat said the demands of the farmers included preparing a constant agricultural policy and patterns based on the needs of the Jordanian market and other markets open to Jordanian products. The demands also included extending urgent loans to farmers so as to enable them to meet their financial commitments, he said. He added that the farmers called for speeding up work on the tomato paste plant in Mafrq and "increasing the number of the farmers' representatives at the Higher Council of Agriculture."

Science festival opens

AMMAN (Petra) — The third scientific festival of the University of Jordan's Faculty of Science was opened Sunday in the presence of University President Farid Ghannouchy, members of the teaching staff and students from the faculty. The two-week festival includes exhibitions of computers, books, stationery and laboratory materials, in addition to video shows and lectures. The festival is organised to welcome new students at the university. A total of 3,961 students were admitted to the university this academic year, which started Saturday.

Committee discusses distribution of aid

AMMAN (Petra) — A committee entrusted with collecting donations for poor families as part of Jordan's celebrations of His Majesty King Hussein's return home following a successful surgery he underwent last month held a meeting Monday under the chairmanship of Justice Minister and Acting Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Youssef Mubaiden. The committee discussed means of distributing sugar, rice, tea, fat, milk and soap to the needy in all parts of Jordan through its sub-committees in the governorates. The committee, which was formed in response to a call by His Majesty King Hussein, was still receiving donations from Jordanian firms and citizens.

Workshop to discuss unemployment

AMMAN (Petra) — A specialised workshop will be held Wednesday at the International Studies Centre at the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) to discuss a study prepared by the centre on unemployment in Jordan. Specialists from the public and private sectors will participate in the workshop. Director of the study project Mohammad Amirah said the study deals with the demographic, social and economic aspects of unemployment. The study, he added, also deals with the causes of unemployment in the Kingdom and projections about unemployment in 1995.

Committee on returnees hold meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — A committee entrusted with following up and studying compensation to be paid to Jordanian expatriates who returned home from Kuwait in the wake of the Gulf crisis met Monday under its chairman, Labour Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabari, in the presence of Jack Seigal, an expert from the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The committee was informed at the meeting of an announcement by the chairman of the U.N. Reparation Committee on special arrangements to register compensation applications by individuals and companies.

Seminar proposes setting up committee to streamline environmental protection efforts

By Lancy Salisbury
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan, like many other nations, is a symbolic signatory to scores of environmental laws never enforced because of poor environmental awareness, lack of coordination and politics, delegates attending an environmental and legislation seminar said Monday.

"Jordan is a leader in the Arab World in signing environmental laws but I am not convinced that what we say is always applied," said Ziyad Alawneh of the Jordanian Society for the Control of Environmental Pollution (JSCPE).

The one-day seminar, organised by JSCPE and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), covered international, regional and national legislation to help Jordan modify its environmental approach.

Delegates also discussed incentives such as reduced taxes to encourage Jordanians to abide by the 60 international treaties and estimated 25 local laws introduced since the 1940's.

Mr. Alawneh said few laws are enforced because few in the country understand the financial, health and environmental costs of littering and other forms of pollution.

For example, Jordan wastes JD3 million a year on goats and sheep that die from eating plastic bags strewn from along the coast of the Dead Sea to the grassy plots of Amman, he said. About 30 per cent of the natural deaths of the Kingdom's estimated 20

million sheep and goat flock are caused by these plastic bags, Mr. Alawneh told the Jordan Times.

Or, he said, one drop of water per second per year from a leaky household tap will fill 2.5 cubic metres. If there are 100,000 households in Amman, each with three leaking taps, that's 300,000 cubic metres of water a year.

Delegates hope such problems could be eased with a draft law discussed at the seminar, opened by member of the Upper House of Parliament and former Prime Minister Ahmad Obaidat, Minister of Rural and Municipal Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzak TUBEISHAT and FNF representative Walter Ruel.

Officials propose studying and consolidating environmental regulations under a single committee to be called the higher council for the environment. The committee is to streamline the cumbersome system where each ministry develops its own resource-related legislation.

The committee and other organisation would also try to spread environmental awareness through posters, programmes and labels — perhaps on plastic bags.

"We are not serious about enforcing these laws despite having a lot of concern. What makes the policeman give priority to giving tickets for speeding instead of for littering or polluting car exhaust? Most people think Jordan lacks legislation but it is a really a question of educating people about these laws and how they can improve the country," Mr. Alawneh said.

In a lecture on the "Industrial Environmental Impact Assessment," delegates also considered incorporating laws that require industries and contractors to conduct ecology impact studies, as is done in Germany and the United States.

Reducing or exempting taxes on industries that import environmental-friendly technology such as catalytic converters for cars, special brushes for factory smoke stacks or water saving devices was also examined.

According to Bassam Anani of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, finances and unskilled workers are two obstacles to environmental legislation in the Arab World. He suggested Yemen and Jordan impose stiff fines to help environmental protection measures with economic development. The Gulf states need to concentrate more on training workers to implement laws, he said.

The Arab World, however, is not alone in toothless anti-pollution policies.

FNF representative Walter Ruel criticised Germany's environmental record. He said that although the number of law suits against offenders increased from 6,750 in 1982 to 22,860 in 1989, only about 20 per cent end in conviction, and the penalties are mild. "Dying trees and dying species can't sue," he warned.

He also urged the European Community (EC) to give smaller member states more leeway, and criticised clauses that restrict countries from adopting EC environmental laws if they restrict free trade.

Turkey waives visa requirements for Jordanians

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanians no longer require prior visas to enter Turkey and are issued entry permission at Turkish airports and land borders, the Turkish ambassador to Jordan said Monday.

However, student visas and multiple entry visas have to be obtained from the Turkish embassy in Amman in a process that takes about two days, Ambassador Mehmet Ali Irtencik said.

"Jordanian citizens travelling to Turkey for business, tourism or any other purposes other than studying in Turkish institutions can now obtain entry visas at the airport or border checkpoints," Mr. Irtencik said.

"Students and those who wish to have multiple entry visas — truck drivers for instance — have

to get their visas from the embassy in Amman," he said, adding that the procedure does not involve clearance from the foreign ministry in Ankara.

Many Western diplomatic missions are not authorised to issue visas to Jordanians without obtaining clearance from their respective foreign ministries. In the case of Turkey, Mr. Irtencik said, visas are issued at the discretion of the embassy.

The waiver of prior visa requirement for Jordanians took effect on Sept. 15 and came in reciprocation to a similar gesture made by Jordan for Turkish nationals two months ago, the ambassador told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview.

"It will also help alleviate the burden on the consular section of the embassy as well as Jordanians who have to line up and wait in

front of the consulate with applications," he said.

According to the ambassador, Turkey and Jordan do not face any problems in facilitating the travel of their nationals to each other.

"We haven't had any problems at all and we are very satisfied with the arrangements," he said. No accurate figures on the annual average number of Jordanians travelling to Turkey annually were available, but estimates put them between 20,000 and 25,000. These include businessmen, tourists and travellers to and from Europe.

Businessmen say Jordan's imports from Turkey have been continuously increasing since the devaluation of the dinar in 1988, which made Western European products relatively expensive for consumers.

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By Rami G. Khouri

Jordan Times

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Jordan Times advertising department.

Stop, fire, go

WE WOULD understand, even sympathise, with the zeal of our traffic police when they stop drivers at random to check on the use of safety belts and other less pressing violations, but only if their attention and vigilance turned once in a while to more critical traffic problems. Jordanians have yet to see Jordanian traffic patrols checking on serious traffic violations such as not stopping at stop signs, not driving in designated lanes, giving way to pedestrians trying to find a second of interruption in that flow of traffic to cross streets and trucks and buses heavily polluting air and environment on a scale unpardonable even under the most relaxed international guidelines. Where is the sense of priority if parking contraventions attract more of our traffic police's attention than facilitating the crossing of streets by our children trying to reach school? Where is the seriousness in the entire endeavour to make the country a safer place to drive in if serious traffic violations go on day in day out while our traffic authorities and personnel busy themselves with the least urgent matters? What adds insult to injury is the occasional abrupt stopping of the traffic in the middle of thoroughfares and avenues for the most trivial reasons. There is obviously a pressing need to overhaul the entire traffic policy in the Kingdom with a view to according critical issues the priority they rightly deserve. We should place street crossings as among the most pressing problems to be solved, especially when it regards students in the early morning hours and late in the afternoons when they return home.

We call for the designation of special police patrols to halt the traffic flow for our youngsters until there is a more permanent traffic system installed for this purpose. If the country cannot afford traffic lights, then the next best thing is, with 30 per cent unemployment, to recruit the necessary police force to enforce basic traffic norms in order to give a break to all of us who would like to cross streets in safety. We also ask for special police attention to stop signs that are perhaps the most abused traffic signs in the country, if not in the whole world. In this context it is amazing how indifferent our insurance companies are about this messy situation in the country. One would have thought that they will be the most interested group trying to put some sense into Jordanian traffic policy. The public needs to be heard about its grievances. Hopefully someone out there will listen to what the people have been saying and complaining about. Enough has already been written about these subjects but to little avail. The only thing left to do is for higher authorities to intervene or else to start organising demonstrations in favour of traffic reforms. There is still hope that the situation has not deteriorated to the point where we should give up and that something can still be done by the concerned authorities.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL DUSTOUR Arabic daily bitterly criticised Iran for occupying the Arab islands in the Gulf region and for turning down Syrian good offices to settle the issue. The paper said that the Arabs are appalled to see Iran acting like all other occupation powers and disregarding the Arab overtures and bids for peace-making. It said that by occupying the Abu Musa Island, Iran has proved its just for expansion at the expense of the Arab World and by ignoring calls for a settlement, the Tehran regime is showing total disregard of the Arab people's feelings. The Iranians have planned their occupation of the islands carefully and found that they would get away with their act in view of the weak and deeply divided Arab World which can do nothing to deter the Iranian ambitions now that Iraq is under sanctions by the Arabs themselves, the paper added. There can be no alternative to submitting the matter to the U.N. Security Council and there is no choice for the weak Arab Nation but to resort to the world community once again to ensure that their rights are respected, the paper continued.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i Arabic daily drew attention to the fact that the United States has caused Jordan to lose some \$125 million since June this year by tightening the pressure on Aqaba, preventing Jordanian bound goods from reaching the port. Tareq Masarweh said that the United States is harming the Jordanian economy and preventing the Jordanian people importing food and medicines and it is regrettable to see the Jordanian government responding favourably to this pressure without resisting. The writer said that since June this year, the port of Aqaba has not handled any transit goods going in any direction due to the U.S. pressure and the sanctions imposed on the port under the excuse of implementing U.N. resolutions. The Americans are denying the Jordanians the right to deal with transit operations passing on food and medicine to the Iraqi people, but allowing the transit business to be handled by Turkey alone because of its alliance with the Turks against Iraq, said the writer. He said that Jordan should not remain passive against this hostile act, it rather should take a practical step to hurt the American interests and deal with the U.S. in the same way. He said that Jordan should at least boycott the ongoing Middle East peace process which has achieved nothing for the Arabs and Jordan, not only because the U.S. is harming Jordan's national interests but also because Washington is showing increased bias to the Israeli enemy. It should be noted, said the writer, that the U.S. which has sold the Jordanian interests to Turkey, is continuing to sell out the Arabs to Israel.

The View from Fourth Circle

Poland or Romania? The Arab future nears

NEWSPAPER REPORTS earlier this month briefly mentioned the most eye-catching, newsworthy element of the 1992 Unified Arab Economic Report — the fact that the Arab countries collectively lost \$620 billion due to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the subsequent war to free it. As usual, the dramatic flash of the headlines did not penetrate deeper down to the real substance and implications of the story at hand. It is a rather gloomy story. But those who really care for the future of the Arab World, as opposed to saving their own skins and assuring their children and cousins secure life-long jobs, should take the time to absorb and assess the full message of the report.

I should first acknowledge the importance of the report itself, published annually by four leading pan-Arab organisations (the Arab Monetary Fund, the Arab League, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, and the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries). This is one of the most useful, sober, and important documents published annually in the Arab World — not only because it fuels the imagination and stokes the sentiments of diehard pan-Arabists such as myself (who believe that there is little chance of sustainable and balanced Arab development without common access and integration among assets such as the oil of the Gulf, the land and water of the Levant, the minerals of North Africa, and the human and financial resources of the entire Arab world), but also because it provides an opportunity to assess the human and economic development trends of the Arab region as a whole.

It would be a useful exercise for ministries of education in the Arab World to make a one-page summary of the main statistical indicators of the report, and make it compulsory reading and discussion material for every Arab school teacher, student, and politician. The lessons learned may be harsh, but they can only be useful if undertaken in a spirit of wanting to work for the true national interest of the Arab people. Slogans, flag-waving, and reviving up the memories of the past are fine as emotional releases and affirmations of our basic quest for dignity. But rarely in the history of human civilisation have they provided bread, lasting stability, true security, or the promise of an authentic national identity coherently expressed.

The facts of the contemporary Arab economic order are gloomy, as a quick review of the most recent Unified Arab Economic Reports shows, even to the most blinkered who lurk amongst us. I have not yet seen the 1992 report, whose summary, released at a pan-Arab financial meeting in Abu Dhabi earlier this month, gave the figure of \$620 billion in net Gulf war costs to the Arabs. But I have been reviewing the statistics in the latest published report (dated 1991, covering the period through 1990). Here is what it shows:

Between 1980 and 1990, the combined gross national product (GNP) of the Arab states decreased from \$440 billion to \$419 billion. This is in current market prices. Adjusted for inflation, and reflecting real purchasing power, the drop would have been significantly larger. We were made to believe we were a rich Arab World. In the last decade, we turned out only to be largely gullible, and frequently irresponsible.

At the same time, the population of the Arab World continued to grow at an annual rate of three per cent, one of the fastest rates

in the world. The average fertility rate for Arab women of reproductive age in 1990 was six — meaning each Arab woman that marries and has children will have an average of six children in her lifetime. For every Arab woman who has three children, another will have nine.

A simple calculation shows that per capita GNP (the average value of goods and services produced by each Arab person) declined by \$1404, or 43 per cent, in the 1980s from \$3,283 to \$1879. Of course, these are aggregate figures that include all Arab countries (don't ask me how many official Arab countries there are today — somewhere around 21, at last count) and they do not accentuate the good progress that a few Arab countries have achieved recently. The negative trends, however, are giants towering over the small positive steps that can be quantified.

The statistics also hide gross disparities between rich and poor that are worsening in most cases, rather than improving. But they confirm the trend that I and others have warned and written about for many years — that the Arab political economy is caught in a severe cycle of stagnation and regression, and is slowly but surely losing the race between resources and quality of life. The consequence is that the Arab World, like New Jersey, is likely to continue to stumble towards the ugly reality of two worlds — a small, wealthy, comfortable minority of Arabs who feel protected by their largely unearned money and the rest-an-army, technobarbarian they buy from the West, and a large, poor, desperate majority of Arabs whose quality of life stagnates in a vicious cycle of dependence, frustration, helplessness, and near-despair. What else, one wonders, is the meaning of tortured lands such as Algeria and Somalia, where human dignity screams to be heard from the dark shadow of massive prison camps, the shattering din of the assassin's bullets, and the shame of death as the routine daily chore of children who look like shivelled old men?

Or do we simply shut our eyes to these tips of our collective iceberg, and, as many Arabs do, make sure our cars are always full of gas and our briefcases full of dollars, air tickets, and visas, in case of the need to make a speedy escape? What else, one wonders, in the meaning of the lines at foreign embassies, or the fact that many northern industrialised countries will not let many Arab nationals even transit through their airports for an hour without first securing a visa? What is it in the Arab psyche that strikes such fear in the minds of immigration officials in Western countries that solicit Arab money and defence contracts, but shun our people? Do they know something about an Arab penchant to flee that is not being sufficiently addressed by the Arab themselves? Do I exaggerate? Is the reality simply too harsh to absorb? Consider some more facts from the 1991 Unified Arab Economic Report:

Between 1980 and 1990, total Arab agricultural exports increased from \$3.8 billion a year to \$4.7 b. a year, while total annual Arab food imports increased from \$21.7 b. to \$25.5 b. The annual food gap increased from \$11.9 b. in 1980 to \$14.9 b. in 1989, and the total food gap in those 10 years was \$135 b. — a pretty serious fact for a region that virtually fed itself in the 1950s, and fed much of Rome, a couple of thousand years ago.

Trade among the Arab countries remains small, accounting for about 8.6 per cent of all Arab imports and exports in 1989 — a

nominal increase of less than one per cent in the decade since 1980. Our economies continue to be adjuncts to the industrialised northern states (Europe, U.S., Japan), which account for the bulk of our foreign trade.

— Pan-Arab official financial and gold reserves decreased in the period 1985-1989, from \$48 b. to \$35.9 b., while debts rose sharply.

— The published foreign debt of the Arab countries increased from \$93 b. in 1984 to \$141 b. in 1989 (the actual debt was certainly much higher, given that much military debt is not published and other foreign debt is disguised in various ways).

— The pan-Arab debt service burden (annual repayments of principal and interest) increased from \$9.8 b. in 1984 to \$14.1 b. in 1989.

If these numbers are depressing, hang on for this one: If you add up what the Arab World pays to the northern industrialised states in foreign debt service, and imports of food, arms, and other goods and services, you find that the Arab World transfers to the industrialised North around \$125 billion every year — other than the estimated \$400-\$500 billion of Arab funds invested in Western banks, government and corporate securities, real estate, and other sectors. No wonder the West would like to maintain the current political economy of the Arab World just as it is, while the vast majority of Arabs would like to change it radically so that it serves Arab rather than foreign interests. No wonder London and Washington are pleased to see the map of Europe revert to the 1920s, but will do everything possible to make sure the map of the Arab World stays exactly as it is today, and as it was drawn by European colonial powers in the early 1920s.

The statistics that mirror our economic condition may change from year to year. The long-term trend, however, is worrying — or should be, particularly to those Arabs who find it easier to stick their heads in the sand rather than to acknowledge the reality that defines us. If current trends continue unchanged and other factors — such as water, armaments, arable land, malnutrition, the overall quality of education and girls' access to education, or capital flight — are considered alongside the few statistics I have offered above, the general prognosis for the Arab World is grim.

Those who prefer to ignore this reality would do well to remember to look into the eyes of the rage and the human despair that resulted in the burning of Kuwait, the disintegration of Somalia, the agony of Lebanon, the suffering of the Palestinians under prolonged occupation, and the state of paralysis and violence that defines Algeria — to mention only the most dramatic manifestations of the underlying political economy that defines most of the Arab World today. Better to deal with these issues now, in a rational, gradual, phased manner — a Poland — rather than to wait for the explosion that is inevitable — a Romania — if current trends continue.

While we're at it, we should also thank the four Arab institutions that produce the Unified Arab Economic Report every year. They dare to deal with reality, and they are a credit to their Arab identity.

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The mystique of the Occident

By Yasser Alwan

THE ARAB World is inextricably enmeshed in perhaps the major theme of contemporary world history: The interaction between modern and traditional societies.

Arabs and Westerners have, on and off, eyed each other with animosity and fascination since before the first Crusade. Indeed, the trinkets borne out of the Industrial Revolution magnified this mutual scrutiny as Arab fascination with the West came to rival the European obsession with the Orient. However, European Orientalism was part and parcel of a larger web of forces and consequences that eventually culminated in the outright or de facto colonisation of the Arab World in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Arab reactions to the West have varied from hostility and suspicion to accommodation and the wholesale adoption of Western conventions. Colonisation further polarised these responses so that by the time the Arab countries gained independence, their populations were culturally divided. And as the enthusiasm for independence and rhetoric for restoring the Golden Age of Islamic civilisation gave way to more humble realities, Arabs began to realise that the impact and consequences of colonisation were far more indelible than its physical eradication.

Insidious and difficult to pinpoint, psychological colonisation has implanted in the psyche of many Arabs a relationship of domination and subordination vis-a-vis the West and ourselves, that parallels, in many ways, that of coloniser and colonised. This phenomenon, often more pernicious than its physical counterpart, grows in our unware minds, invisible and disguised in our own thoughts. It has, in fact, become an indivisible part of today's Arab World.

Politically, the impact of European colonisation is clear: Arab civil societies have been recognised by their own political and military elite, perpetuating similar reprehensible consequences, distorting cultural growth, creating radical disparities in the distribution of economic wealth, and inhibiting the advancement of society in general. In the last 40 years, Arab societies have reproduced the same oppressive systems of government that were imposed on them in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and some countries are just beginning to emerge from this gloom.

Other instances of this phenomenon are manifest and can be summed up in an unbridled Arab infatuation with, and conspicuous consumption of, things occidental. For example, in its short history, more Jordanians have already paid tribute to that museum of Western-style consumption and tastes, Safeway, than to their own National Gallery. We don't resplendent clothing to convince ourselves of our own worth. And too many Arab men have misplaced their honour and dignity in their bank account, Gucci suits, Mercedes cars or by repressing their sister, wife, or daughter. In education, we are enchanted with Western science and technology to the extent that we discourage our chil-

dren from studying the arts and humanities. Instead, we and our closed system of education programme our youth to study and respect medicine and engineering only, while we send those least qualified to become our historians, anthropologists, and philosophers.

What is so special about medicine and engineering that Arab societies value them above other fields? Are they seen as a panacea for the problems of developing societies? Or have we overlooked the fact that without basic human and civil rights, and bona fide democracy, increasing the number of professors and universities, doctors and hospitals, engineers and post-modern buildings is mere cosmetic change.

There has been such emphasis on raising our children to become Doctor or Bash-muhandis so-and-so that many have forgotten that it is the process and not the degree that makes one worthy of the title. If education and scholarship are measured only by degrees then we have sapped the meaning of higher education and transformed it into another materialistic urge. Our education systems, like our societies, are out of balance, in between.

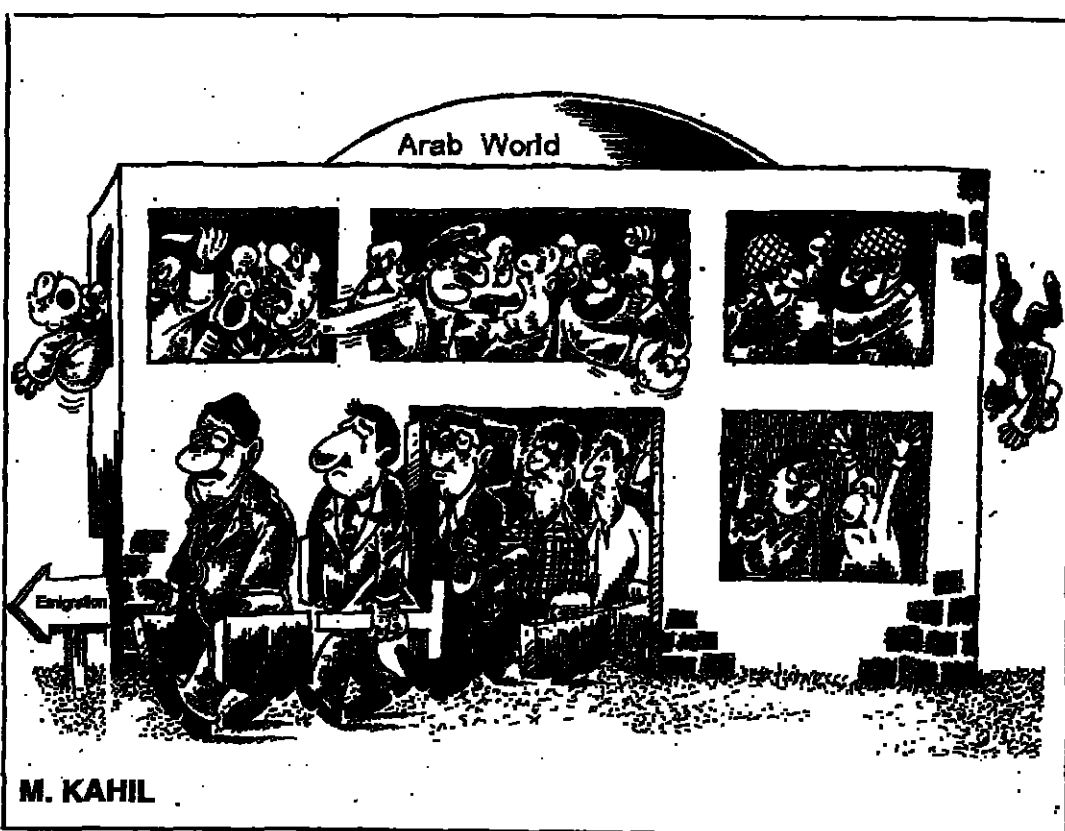
Throughout history, every period of cultural and political efflorescence began with an authentic philosophical foundation. So before Arabs rush headlong to explore the sciences, we must first explore and open ourselves and our rigid thinking to constructive, internal criticism. We need to search deeply for genuine Arab values, cultivate an indigenous ethics, and develop a

philosophy, based on our perceptions of our own history, politics, and culture from which we can gain strength and a sense of historical identity. Otherwise, we will continue to buy technology without ever innovating our own. We will continue to measure ourselves by Western values and standards, and perpetuate the society-wide schizophrenia and inferiority complex that plagues us. We must confront issues of dignity, identity, and authenticity with responses more subtle and mature than mere rejectionism or total accommodation.

For decades, the Western powers appropriated our raw materials and developed our infrastructures according to their own needs. When they were finally forced to withdraw, some of us discovered that the colonisers had also penetrated our minds and stole our eyes. I sincerely hope that my glasses are dar-

ter than what I see around me, but I recognise that my eyes have been stolen and I am struggling to get them back.

The writer, a graduate from Georgetown University's Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, holds a Masters degree in history. He was a Thomas J. Watson Fellow in Egypt, Jordan and Sudan in 1986-1987. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.



Turkey bogged in bloody stalemate with Kurds

By Alistair Lyon
Reuters

ANKARA — Turkey, aspiring to shine as a democratic beacon for former Soviet republics grappling with ethnic conflicts, is making no headway in its own battle with Kurdish separatists.

After eight years of fighting, the government is still locked in a bloody stalemate with Kurdish rebels and the level of violence is rising.

So far this year nearly 1,800 civilians, guerrillas and members of the security forces have been killed in the mainly Kurdish southeast — more than 400 in the past seven weeks.

The 1992 toll accounts for well over a third of the 4,800 deaths since the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) began its armed struggle for an independent Kurdish state in 1984.

"Do not take this as blackmail

or a threat, but if the guns are not silenced, certain things can overtake even us," President Turgut Ozal was quoted as saying last week.

Mr. Ozal, who has only limited executive powers, said stopping the fighting could pave the way for "certain steps" but did not elaborate. He said he was preparing a report for his sworn political enemy, Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel.

Mr. Demirel's 10-month-old coalition government has vowed to crack down hard on the PKK, apparently seeing no place for political initiatives until the guerrillas have been smashed.

Many Turks vehemently oppose any action which could be interpreted as a concession to the PKK, branded by Ankara and its Western allies as a terrorist group with foreign backers.

Chief Appeals Court Judge Ismet Ocaloglu raised a storm

this month when he argued that a democratic state was entitled to use the same means and methods as its terrorist opponents.

Ankara says the PKK, a hard-left organisation led by Abdullah Ocalan, finds sanctuary in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Lebanon, and funds its operations from heroin smuggling and protection rackets among Kurdish communities in Western Europe.

This weekend's leadership contest among the Kurdish-based People's Labour Party (HEP), which has 18 seats in parliament, looks certain to sharpen the political debate.

A HEP congress chose a Kurdish clan chief, Ahmet Turk, as its new leader. Turkish press reports said Kurdish guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan had told other candidates to withdraw.

Outgoing HEP Chairman Feridun Yazar said the party had "no organic link to the PKK" but the

two were "relations".

"The PKK did not come from the moon," he told the congress. "They are also the children of this country. The PKK must be legalised so it can lay down arms and engage in political struggle."

Mr. Yazar said he planned a meeting with Mr. Ocalan.

State Security Court Prosecutor Nurettin Demirel has tried several times in the past year to get parliament to lift the immunity of some HEP deputies he accuses of sedition.

Last year's election encouraged hopes that HEP deputies, who have since quit the Social Democrat wing of the coalition, could act as Kurdish interlocutors in a political dialogue.

HEP members themselves say the government never showed any willingness for a dialogue or a radical, democratic approach.

"The state's blocking of democratic channels, and thereby causing illegality, is the reason for armed struggle," prominent HEP deputy Mahmut Alinak has told Reuters.

"Blaming the PKK as a terrorist organisation and trying to destroy it militarily will do nothing but add to its strength. Kurds pin their hopes on Mr. Ocalan because they see him and the PKK as the alternative to the state's military policies," he said.

The PKK has increased raids on military and civilian targets this year, often taking on troops with hundreds of fighters.

About 165,000 troops, police and Kurdish irregulars backed by strike aircraft and helicopter patrol the southeast.

But they are losing hearts and

minds with tactics such as the destruction wreaked last month on the town of Sirnak, where residents rejected official statements that troops had been battling hundreds of PKK infiltrators.

The government has tried by military and diplomatic means to deny the PKK freedom of action in neighbouring countries.

Interior Minister Ismet Sezgin reached a border agreement in Tehran last week. Syrian Interior Minister Mohammad Harba visited Ankara to review an existing security protocol.

It is not clear if these efforts will halt the spiralling violence or end the alienation felt by many Kurds in the region.

"The Kurds do not want to separate. They want to live with Turks in an egalitarian, democratic atmosphere," Mr. Alinak said. "For the state it is not too late today. Tomorrow it may be."

Mrs. Shbeilat challenges legality of court

(Continued from page 1)
Justice," the official said, explaining that there were a number of conditions that have to be met before a case can be appealed at the Higher Court of Justice.

Among these conditions are jurisdiction in the case by the other court, violation of the Constitution or mistake in its application, misuse of authority or fault in the form of a decision or measure that needs the final decision of the Higher Court.

"The investigations and interrogations which are undertaken by the State Security Court prosecutor-general or military public attorney are judicial mea-

asures which are outside the specialization of the higher court," he said.

The court will set a date for hearing the case within 10 days, according to informed sources, and it is expected that there will be a preliminary session within two days in which the court could decide to reduce the period for submitting the statement of defence to less than 15 days as required by the law.

Respective of which way the court rules, it will be a rare case of an important constitutional issue being raised in the country for the first time, according to legal sources.

Bare French 'yes' brings relief

(Continued from page 1)

cooperate closely in... facilitating a narrowing of interest-rate differentials."

The United States and Britain have been pressing Germany to cut its interest rates, but Spanish Economics Minister Carlos Solchaga, the chairman of the interim committee, said U.S. rates should rise, too.

"What is clear... is part of the problem... comes from the fact that interest rates in Germany are too high and interest rates in the United States are too low," said Mr. Solchaga, whose own currency was battered during last week's market crisis. "I hope and think... that in the future this interest rate differential will be reduced."

The U.S. Federal Reserve has been cutting rates for three years in an effort to foster a sustained recovery from the recession. But the U.S. economy remains nearly stagnant and Bush administration officials, seeking to bolster the president's reelection chances, have continued to press the central bank to consider further rate cuts.

Britain, as current EC president, meanwhile signalled time-out in the march towards closer European union and signs of growing British opposition to the Maastricht Treaty.

Prime Minister John Major, who called an extraordinary EC summit for early next month, said: "At Europe's governments need to reflect hard on the lessons of the last weeks and months and on the future direction of the community."

But in an article for the Evening Standard newspaper he said the EC must not be paralysed by the fate of the Maastricht Treaty.

"Now even the French have shown they have serious doubts about the extent of control from Brussels, serious concerns about

the threat to their national identity," he said.

A senior British official said Mr. Major wanted the summit to be held as soon as possible but it had not yet been possible to fix a date when all could attend.

The meeting, expected to be in London, will concentrate on three issues that have shaken the community to its roots:

— The turmoil in the money markets that has seen the suspension of the pound and the Italian lira from the European exchange rate mechanism.

The leaders will consider possible changes to ERM mechanisms to mend what Mr. Major calls "fault lines" in the system. He said on Monday: "We shall not go back into the system until the flaws have been put right."

Concerns that have surfaced among the peoples of Europe about erosion of national identity and centralisation of power in Brussels that would follow as a consequence of the Maastricht Treaty. This was a prime cause of the Danish rejection.

Britain and the EC Commission of Brussels are working on ways to put into effect the concept of "subsidiarity," or ensuring that all decisions are taken at the lowest practical level. Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said in a television interview the main question was "how to do effectively what Europe has to do with a greater deal of public support."

— This issue is linked with the third: How to bring Denmark back on board. All 12 states must ratify Maastricht before it can come into effect.

British officials were cagey about how to proceed on the Danish position. Renegotiation of the treaty is ruled out, but some sources have indicated extra clauses might be considered putting flesh on the "subsidiarity" idea.

Rabin: Peace with Syria in 6 months

(Continued from page 1)
than expected on Thursday, blaming Israel's refusal to discuss full withdrawal.

On Sunday, Israel Interior Minister Arye Deri said a formula had been found for Syria to return to the negotiating table.

"The team negotiating with the Syrian delegation is to achieve full peace, open borders, free movement of people and trade... diplomatic relations, embassies, normalisation," Mr. Rabin said.

Israel, he said, wanted "a peace treaty that stands on its own two feet" without being conditional on what might or might not be achieved with Jordan.

Lebanon and the Palestinians.

"So long as we do not get a positive answer from Syria... we will not enter into a discussion of territorial matters," he told his critics.

The demonstrators, including the previous government's chief negotiator to the talks with Syria, said they did not believe Syrian President Hafez Al Assad would ever be interested in peace with Israel.

Former negotiator Yossi Ben-Aharon told reporters: "The truth is the Syrians want the territories, all the territories and they are not prepared to give peace in exchange for it."

UAE wants feud arbitration

(Continued from page 1)

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) said the editorial noted that Syria had referred to Iranian efforts "to maintain security" on the island as "acts of aggression and occupation."

Tehran Radio reported Mr. Rafsanjani told Mr. Sharara that Iran would not drop its claim to full sovereignty over the island.

"Our Syrian friends are quite aware that having an impartial stance is the basic requirement in any diplomatic mediation," the

Tehran Times said in the editorial.

It said Iran preferred to negotiate directly with officials from Shabab or the UAE.

"If they prefer to have the matter settled through a mediator, Tehran will have no objections provided the mediator is an impartial party and not a country like Syria which has already taken sides in the affair," the newspaper said.

Mr. Rafsanjani has warned Gulf Arab states that the United States and the West are behind the dispute.

U.S. begins troop airlift to Somalia

(Continued from page 1)

with communications. The airport's control tower has been gutted by looters.

Washington says the force of 2,100 marines was on its way to Singapore from the Gulf when it was diverted for the operation, and will help guide the aircraft and be on hand for medical treatment and any search-and-rescue operations.

A top U.N. official said Sunday Somalia's main warlord will be responsible for thousands of deaths if he blocks the deployment of more U.N. troops to protect relief shipments.

U.N. special envoy Mohammad Sahnoun made the statement a day after General Mohammad Farah Aidid, who heads the strongest of many clan-based militias, ruled out increasing the armed U.N. force from 500 to the 3,500. The move has been

authorized by the U.N. Security Council.

The warlord also urged the United States to withdraw its 2,100 marines off the Somali coast, saying they would not contribute to peace in the disintegrating country.

Mr. Sahnoun said no U.N. soldiers will be deployed to guard shipments until after all 500 arrive in seven or eight days.

Mr. Sahnoun said in an interview an international donors conference will be held in Geneva on Oct. 14 to discuss emergency relief and rebuilding of Somalia.

He said southern Somalia needs 100,000 tonnes of food in the next 100 days to feed the starving — but the international community cannot bring in that amount unless other Somali ports, especially Kisumu in the south, are secured by U.N. forces.

Collector offers Britain £1bn hoard of rare art treasures

By Ian Birrell
and Robina Gibb

ONE OF the world's most valuable private art collections, worth an estimated £1 billion, is being offered to Britain by a reclusive Iranian-born philanthropist.

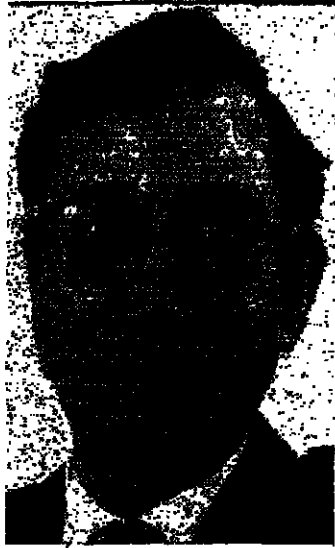
Nasser Khalili, a publicity-shy businessman, is holding confidential discussions with Whitehall officials to find how best to display his 20,000 treasures in a museum in London, his adoptive home.

Dr. Khalili has spent more than 20 years amassing the collection of Islamic art, which includes richly-illustrated Korans, medieval arms, jewellery and rare ceramics and pictures. The collection, bought through an offshore fund and stored in warehouses around the world, has been seen by only a handful of scholars.

This weekend art experts described the offer as unprecedented. Peter Stock, a specialist in Islamic writings at the British Library, said Dr. Khalili was a collector who had consistently bought the finest works. "He has all the pieces we could not afford. His collection is superlative and to have it on permanent display in this country would be phenomenal."

Dr. Khalili, 46, who has been approached by several countries eager to display his collection, disclosed he had chosen Britain because of strong personal links. "I live here, my wife is English and my children go to school here, so my priority is to house it in this country."

He has already transferred ownership of most of the works to



Nasser Khalili

a British foundation chaired by Lord Young of Graffham, the former trade secretary. He wants to have them displayed in their own museum under the supervision of the British Museum for a trial period of 15 years, before concluding a deal to exhibit them there permanently.

Dr. Khalili, who is Jewish, said he hoped to show the world the importance of Islamic art. "Art is a universal language, a tool for bringing people together. Islam has been labelled with a bad image, of fundamentalists taking hostages, but I want to prove that it has a lot more to offer."

A team of leading academics in the field has spent more than seven years cataloguing his pieces, and the first four books of a 26-volume inventory will be published next month.



Gift horses: A page from the Rashid Al Sin illustrated manuscript

Among the highlights are manuscripts and miniatures, which include the Universal History of Rashid Al Din, one of the world's great medieval illustrated manuscripts worth an estimated £12m. The collection of Korans runs to four catalogue volumes. The astronomical and scientific instruments include a unique 13th-century bronze celestial globe, now known to be the original of a copy in the Louvre, Paris.

Dr. Khalili said the collection, started by his family who were art dealers in Tehran, was developed

after he left Iran in 1967 using a fortune acquired by dealing in art, commodities and property. His determination led him to pay a succession of world-record prices, earning him the nickname in the trade of "the Getty of Islamic art."

He moved to London in 1980, where he has become a discreet fund-raiser for charity and a significant contributor to the Conservative Party. Two years ago he gave London University £600,000 to establish a chair in Islamic art and architecture.

Experts said that the addition of Dr. Khalili's collection to Britain's heritage would make London the world's leading centre for the study of the art form.

However, several Islamic and Western countries, including Spain, are keen to obtain the collection and there is concern that Britain might lose the chance if ministers do not act quickly. In 1988 Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza decided to take his £780m collection of old masters and modern art to Spain rather than Britain because he felt it was more enthusiastic.

Mr. Young, a cabinet minister at the time, said he was talking to British officials about Dr. Khalili's offer and hoped "we would not miss out on another world-class collection."

A spokesman for the National Heritage Department said the government could not discuss the issue publicly at present. "We are aware that Dr. Khalili is interested in locating his collection in this country but we cannot say anything because there has not been a formal offer yet."

Bush's tactics have familiar ring for Britons

By Walter R. Mears
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Bored by an economic slump, reelection campaign officials couldn't boast of prosperity or argue that things were going so well voters shouldn't risk change. So political strategists decided on a negative alternative: The other guy can't be trusted.

The odds were poor and the poll ratings were against them. It may sound like President Bush's campaign strategy, but instead is a description by John Major's campaign director of the way things looked for the British prime minister last spring before he led his Conservative Party to an upset victory.

The political systems are different, of course: Parliamentary elections instead of a direct choice between presidential candidates and a month's campaign instead of a marathon. Presidents are assured four year terms; a prime minister can be toppled by parliament.

In addition, British public opinion polls before the April 9 elections were closer than those that now show Democrat Bill Clinton leading Bush by margins of 10 to 15 percentage points.

But the problem issues and the tactics of Mr. Bush's Republicans and Mr. Major's Conservatives read like campaign sequels. John Lucy, director of campaigning for the Conservatives, and Mark Fullbrook, his deputy, talked about them at a forum sponsored by the Heritage Foundation.

"At the end of the day, the question came down to trust," Mr. Fullbrook said.

That's the question the Bush campaign is trying to raise about Mr. Clinton, seeking to persuade voters that the Democrat would not be trustworthy as president. The use of the draft issue is an example — the target isn't a deferment 23 years ago, it is Mr. Clinton's inconsistencies on the topic this year. Another example: Bush's claim to offer experience and a firm hand in contrast to what he contends is waffling and

wavering by Mr. Clinton. And any topic that shifts the campaign away from the sagging economy to other concerns probably works to the advantage of the trailing Republican ticket.

Mr. Clinton says that Mr. Bush is the one who can't be trusted, since he promised in 1988 there would be no new taxes, and reneged. "I'm not the one who said read by my lips," Mr. Clinton tells his rallies.

To that, Mr. Bush counters that Mr. Clinton would impose massive tax increases, and that while the Democrats say those would apply to the rich, middle class taxpayers would be hit, too.

"He's going to end up taxing all working Americans for the same reason outlaw Willie Sutton robbed banks, because that's where the money is," Mr. Bush says.

That, too, parallels the British campaign. A Labour budget proposed a tax increase on the rich; Mr. Lucy said it would have hit anybody earning 45,000 or more, and the Conservatives argued daily that if they lost, the

tax burden would soar.

In prior campaigns, the Conservatives had argued that a Labour victory would ruin a solid, improving economy — the Bush campaign primer when he ran to succeed Ronald Reagan four years ago.

But that won't work in hard times.

"So we had to think of a slightly different message," Mr. Lucy said, a negative one. "And so our simple, different message was that things are bad but don't let Labour make things even worse... you can't trust Labour."

Substitute Mr. Clinton and the Democrats for Labour, and that has been the Bush standby in dealing with an economic situation he acknowledged has been lousy.

"There was no subtlety in our campaign at all," Mr. Fullbrook added. "You can't trust Labour — that was our No. 1 message... just think how bad it would have been and will be if they get their hands on the economy."

That's been a Republican argument, too.

"If you are Republicans, I know how you feel," Mr. Lucy said. "You're worried people. With less than seven weeks to go,

Mr. Clinton's lead is holding in national polls.

"Everybody thought we had a terrible campaign, lackluster," the conservative campaigner said. "But nevertheless, we won."

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	NEW YORK CLOSE 20/9/92	TOKYO CLOSE 21/9/92
Sterling Pound	1.7355	1.7330
Deutsche Mark	1.4714	1.4840
Swiss Franc	1.3075	1.3075
French Franc	5.7450***	5.0725**
Japanese Yen	123.71	124.00
European Currency Unit	1.2965 ***	1.3150**

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European Opening at 9.00 a.m. GMT
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Eurocurrency Interest Rates

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	3.31	3.25	3.21	3.31
Sterling Pound	10.12	9.12	8.60	8.62
Deutsche Mark	8.88	8.88	8.88	8.75
Swiss Franc	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.81
French Franc	10.12	9.87	9.87	9.50
Japanese Yen	4.31	5.96	3.84	3.78
European Currency Unit	11.75	10.56	10.25	9.93

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Prices: 21/9/92

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	348.55	6.65	Silver	5.83	.081

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 21/9/92

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.679	0.681
Sterling Pound	1.1779	1.1778
Deutsche Mark	0.4576	0.4599
Swiss Franc	0.5221	0.5247
French Franc	0.1345	0.1352
Japanese Yen	0.5468	0.5495
Dutch Guilder	0.4060	0.4080
Swedish Krona	0.1224	0.1230
Italian Lira	0.0548	0.0551
Belgian Franc	0.02195	0.02206

Other Currencies

Date: 21/9/92

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7720	1.7840
Lebanese Lira	0.02895	0.03095
Saudi Riyal	0.18080	0.1820
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.2250	2.2800
Qatari Riyal	0.1840	0.1850
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2100
Omani Rial	1.7310	1.7430
UAE Dirham	0.1840	0.1850
Greek Drachma	0.3755	0.3955
Cypriot Pound	1.5250	1.5550

CAIR Index for Amman Financial Market

Date: 21/9/92

Index	20/9/92	Close	19/9/92	Close
All-Share	146.45		146.52	
Banking Sector	108.47		108.29	
Insurance Sector	152.14		151.99	
Industry Sector	195.89		196.37	
Services Sector	212.71		212.90	

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Monday.

One Sterling	1.7080/90	U.S. dollars	1.2220/25
One U.S. dollar	1.4895/905	Canadian dollar	1.6680/720
	1.3090/105	Deutsche marks	30.6777
	5.0400/900	Dutch guilders	1247/1257
	5.5630/930	Swiss francs	124.05/10
	6.0250/555	Belgian francs	5.5630/930
	5.7800/82	French francs	6.0250/555
		Japanese yen	5.7800/82
One ounce of gold	\$384.30/348.60	Swedish crowns	
		Norwegian crowns	
		Danish crowns	

Bush proposes old plan to help new currency woes

WASHINGTON (R) — President George Bush Sunday resurrected a five-year old proposal to strengthen economic cooperation among the world's richest industrial nations by making greater use of gold and other commodities as a measure of monetary worth and economic performance.

In an apparent attempt to portray himself as a world economic leader, Mr. Bush told policymakers from the International Monetary Fund that the industrial nations must work more closely together for the good of the world economy.

His proposal — to use a basket of commodities to help determine the true worth of major currencies — came against the backdrop of a currency crisis in Europe that has raised fresh doubts about the continent's drive for economic unity.

"The aim of the coordination process in this new era should be to promote a healthy and progressive world economy and a stable monetary system," Mr. Bush said. "I believe the political leadership of our nations will need to play an increasingly active role in this work."

The proposal was reminiscent of an idea first floated by White House chief of staff James Baker in 1987 when he was treasury secretary under former president Ronald Reagan.

At that time, the idea, also made during an annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, was first greeted as a return to the gold standard.

But it later became clear that the proposal was far less modest

and has been since incorporated into the policy coordination process of the Group of Seven — United States, Germany, France, Britain, Japan, Canada and Italy.

The currency crisis has sent Europe reeling but officials are hopeful that the approval by the French of the Maastricht Treaty will cool speculation and allow the markets to catch their breath.

The United States has essentially played a bit part in the European drama, allowing Mr. Bush to take on the role of mediator.

The decision to meet with officials from the IMF allowed the United States to press its campaign to generate global growth in the belief that economic weakness posed a greater problem than inflation.

IMF committee chief calls for lower German interest rates

WASHINGTON (R) — The head of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) policymaking committee urged Germany Monday to cut interest rates to help calm skittish currency markets.

"Interest rates in Germany are too high and U.S. rates are too low," committee chairman Carlos Solchaga told a news conference.

Mr. Solchaga, who is also

Spanish finance minister, said he does not want a rise in U.S. interest rates now.

But IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus said the Federal Reserve (Fed), the U.S. central bank, should promptly act to increase rates if the U.S. economic recovery gathers momentum.

Mr. Camdessus said he would "recommend the Fed be prompt and accompany the recovery with moderate increases in rates as the recovery gains momentum."

German interest rates are more than three times higher than those of the United States. The wide spread between the two rates temporarily pushed the dollar to record lows earlier this month and has contributed to strains in the European Monetary System.

Mr. Camdessus urged the United States, Germany and Italy to all reduce their budget deficits in order to bring down interest rates worldwide.

"This is element one, the basic tenet of our common strategy," he said.

The two men spoke after the Interim Committee released a communique that stressed the need for greater economic cooperation among major nations to calm currency markets.

The committee said the world economy is recovering but the rebound remains sluggish and uneven.

"Unemployment is unacceptably high and recent exchange market tensions have increased uncertainty," the committee said in its communique.

Sweden slays sacred cows to save economy

STOCKHOLM (R) — Sweden's political leaders announced Sunday major and permanent cuts in its legendary welfare state, which economists said would save the crown from devaluation if European currency markets stay calm.

The lower handouts for pensions, sickness, injury, housing and other welfare payments, combined with higher taxes on petrol and tobacco, will hit every Swedish household from next January.

"I regret this," said opposition Social Democratic leader Ingvar Carlsson, who announced the measures alongside conservative prime minister Carl Bildt. "But Sweden is in the worst economic crisis for many decades," Mr. Carlsson added.

The combined spending cuts and new taxes will save \$4.96 billion in calendar 1993, rising to \$7.37 billion by 1997.

The most revolutionary cut, worth an annual \$8 billion, was an agreement eventually to scrap sickness and injury payments from the state insurance system, making employers and workers jointly responsible.

For some Social Democrats, it was bitterly ironic to see their party join the bourgeois government, traditionally political foes of the working class, in slaying the once-sacred cows of Swedish welfare.

"This deal is a scandal. Ingvar Carlsson has sold out the soul of the workers' party," said Gosta Brodin, Social Democratic leader in Astorp in southern Sweden.

But economists were cautiously optimistic that financial markets would greet the package as evidence that Sweden had at last got its act together and straightened out a structural budget deficit.

"It was good to see the govern-

ment and opposition up there saying they will work together," said Olov Trygg, head of trading at Swedbank.

He warned however that other factors were in play. "If the French 'yes' vote is confirmed, and if the (European exchange rate mechanism) survives, then the storm could blow over us too," he said.

Sweden's Riksbank central bank has been forced to raise its key marginal lending rate to 500 percent at least until Tuesday, to protect the crown against speculation of a devaluation.

"Provided it is fairly calm on the international scene over the next weeks, these measures will be enough," said Nordbanken chief economist Nils Lundgren.

Handelsbanken currency dealer Mikael Neumann also saw the crown's future linked to events outside Swedish control. "We must have calm in Europe before this (savings) package can have any effect," he said.

Britain to introduce broad money targets

WASHINGTON (R) — Britain, which was at the centre of last week's European currency crisis, will develop broad money policy targets, Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont said Sunday.

"We will have broad money targets," Mr. Lamont told a news conference, "but whether we will publish them, that's a different matter."

Mr. Lamont earlier made a statement to the Interim Committee of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in which he said British monetary conditions must remain tight enough to secure his objectives on inflation. Currently, Britain has only one published monetary target, the narrow money target.

Mr. Lamont said sterling's withdrawal last week from the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM) was not a soft option. "Operating a floating (exchange rate) regime is difficult and is not a soft option," Mr. Lamont said.

Mr. Lamont repeated his belief that sterling's central rate of 2.95 marks within the ERM had not made British industry uncompetitive.

He pointed to Britain's export performance and current account record with Europe to support his

view adding, "the evidence is overwhelming that (2.95 marks) was a sustainable and appropriate rate."

In his statement to the IMF's Interim Committee, Mr. Lamont said British monetary policy has been tighter than was necessary in recent months.

"Our continuing assessment of monetary conditions has suggested that in recent months monetary policy has been tighter than required to deliver our objectives for inflation," Mr. Lamont said.

Mr. Lamont said that with sterling inside the ERM, Britain was unable to loosen its policy because of the pressures of other European interest rates.

"The fallen sterling we have seen since last Wednesday has produced some loosening of monetary policy," Mr. Lamont said. "But we are determined to ensure that monetary conditions remain sufficiently tight to secure the government's inflation objective."

He said British monetary policy will be supported by a tight fiscal stance. "With sterling now floating outside the ERM, a rigorous approach to public spending will be even more important," he said.

Mr. Lamont said Britain's operation of monetary policy would be carried out in a way that would take no risks with inflation.

Egypt cleric wants law banning word 'interest'

CAIRO (R) — The rector of Egypt's world famous Al Azhar Islamic University has proposed a law to ban the word "interest" from investment documents in Egypt, the Al Gomhouriya newspaper has reported.

The influential 1,000-year-old university, which draws students from all over the Muslim World, has supported the Egyptian state's secular-oriented view of Islam for most of this century but now shows signs of adopting fundamentalist stances.

Al Gomhouriya said Gad Al Haq Al Gad Al Haq had sent the proposal to Egypt's Council of State, suggesting the words "Grant" or "incentive" could replace the word "interest," which most Muslim authorities consider to be against Islam.

Egypt's central bank removed the word from its own accounting system earlier this year after a similar proposal by Gad Al Haq and now uses the word "return."

Earlier this year, a committee from Al Azhar took history books away from an exhibition, which they deemed anti-Islamic. President Hosni Mubarak later personally reversed the move.

World's largest bank cuts executives' pay by 5%

TOKYO (AP) — Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank Ltd., the world's largest bank in terms of assets, has announced streamlining plans that include a five per cent pay cut for 41 top executives and a 20 per cent reduction in their entertainment allowances.

Along with cuts in other expenses, including business trips and advertising, the bank expects to save 5 billion yen (\$40 million), per year, bank official Yoshihide Akazawa said. He would not disclose the present pay for executives or their entertainment allowances.

The measures go into effect this month and will remain in place "for the time being," he said.

Dai-ichi Kangyo is the first commercial bank to announce streamlining measures since Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa said that he is ready to use public funds to help banks suffering from bad loans as part of government rescue measures for the economy.

Mr. Akazawa said the bank may also close some of its 621 branch offices in Japan and abroad.

The bank will also scale back investment in a computer system by 100 billion yen (\$800 million) over the next four years. Mr. Akazawa would not release the total investment figure.

Mr. Miyazawa said the government will contribute to a private corporation to be set up later this year to buy real estate held by banks as collateral on bad loans. He added that banks, in return, should disclose the size of their bad debts.

So far banks have not given a complete picture of their bad debts and analysts estimate the amount at anywhere from \$79 billion to \$550 billion.

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Azeris urge Karabakh Armenians to surrender

MOSCOW (R) — Azerbaijan's President Abulfaz Elchibey urged Armenian fighters in the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh Sunday to surrender as a prerequisite for peace.

Mr. Elchibey also called for a ceasefire guaranteed by foreign observers under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). "A ceasefire can be established in Nagorno-Karabakh, but the forces behind the armed units in Nagorno-Karabakh must declare that we are commanding them," he told Commonwealth television.

Mr. Elchibey's surrender demand echoed an earlier ultimatum by his military high command which gave Armenian forces two days to retreat or face the consequences.

TASS quoted Azerbaijan's high command as saying the Armenians would be guaranteed "unobstructed retreat along the Lachin corridor."

The Lachin corridor, a route leading from Armenia to the Karabakh capital Stepanakert, is mostly in Armenian hands but well-placed Azeri guns can block access.

More than 2,000 people have been killed in four years of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave populated mainly by Armenians but ruled by Azeri-

jan since 1923.

Mr. Elchibey voiced support for CSCE peace efforts, saying the conflict could be resolved "in one week through CSCE channels." CSCE-sponsored peace talks in Rome ended in failure earlier this month.

Armenian news agencies said Armenian forces repelled a major Azeri overnight attack on towns in Karabakh, causing many casualties.

TASS quoted the official Azeri News Agency, Azertinform, as saying dozens of people were killed Saturday evening when three Armenian helicopters bombed villages in the southwest of the republic.

Interfax News Agency quoted the Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Committee, representing Armenians, as saying scores of Azeri troops had been killed.

The committee denied an Azeri Defence Ministry report that Azeri forces captured about 15 villages in and around the mountainous territory, inhabited mainly by Armenians but administered by Azerbaijan.

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh appeared likely to escalate despite Mr. Elchibey's support for a ceasefire.

The Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Committee said Azerbaijan's forces had been blocked in a drive to reach the strategic

Lachin corridor.

It said at least 95 Azeri soldiers and three Armenians were killed in the battle for the Lachin corridor. It also reported heavy Azeri losses in other areas.

At least 2,000 people have been killed in four years of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh. Reliable information on casualties has been difficult to obtain, with both sides frequently issuing conflicting reports.

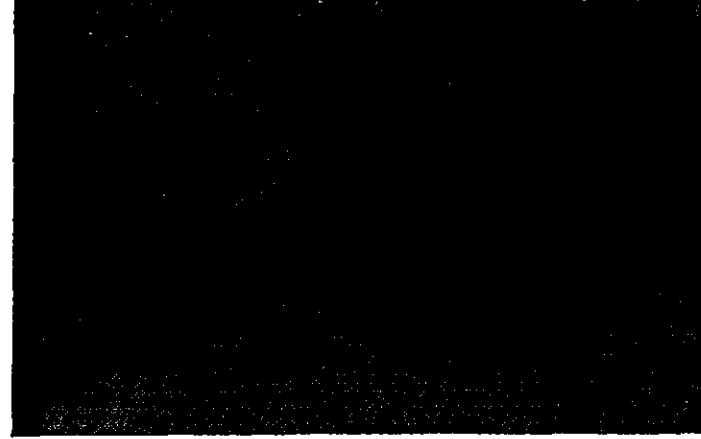
In Georgia, radio Russia quoted the Abkhazian defence committee as saying Georgian troops had fortified their positions and were regrouping around the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi and the Gumista River.

Hundreds of people have been killed in clashes since Georgia's ruling State Council sent troops into Abkhazia last month after the local parliament demanded more autonomy.

At least six government soldiers were killed Saturday when gunmen ambushed their bus near the town of Gagra in the western region of Abkhazia.

ITAR-TASS News Agency said residents of Gagra took to the streets in protest against the violence. Radio Russia later reported sustained Georgian shelling of Abkhazian positions.

Meanwhile, the new leader of war-torn Tajikistan Monday threatened to forcibly disarm



Two Armenian women, made refugees after Azerbaijan captured their village, comfort each other.

feeding groups in the Central Asian state unless they stopped fighting in the next few days. ITAR-TASS News Agency said.

Acting President Akbar Iskandarov issued an appeal to the Tajik people in which he told leaders of the groups that they had until Friday to "stop the fighting and bloodshed."

"If they fail to do so they will be declared traitors to the nation. Force will be used against them — they will be forcibly disarmed and brought to justice," TASS quoted the appeal as saying.

Hundreds of people have died in months of clashes between supporters and opponents of former President Rakhmon

Nabiyev, who resigned at gunpoint two weeks ago.

Neighbouring Central Asian states are nervously watching the conflict, aware they also face the danger of ethnic unrest.

Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov said in a television interview Sunday evening he was worried about ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan, who say some supporters of the new leadership are forcing them to flee their homes.

"As long as I am leader of Uzbekistan I will not allow a stand-off between Tajiks and Uzbeks," said Mr. Karimov, a friend of Mr. Nabiyev. Both men are former republican Communist Party heads.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Estonia elections end in deadlock

TALLINN, Estonia (R) — Estonia Monday was set for tough political bargaining to choose its next leader after the first post-Soviet presidential elections ended in deadlock. Arnold Ruutel, the outgoing president who steered Estonia's successful drive for independence from Moscow, was the clear popular favourite in Sunday's polls with 42.7 per cent of the vote, according to virtually complete official results. His main opponent, Lemart Meri, won 28.8 per cent of the popular vote. Mr. Ruutel's failure to win a 50 per cent majority meant the presidency would be decided by a new parliament in which rightist parties favouring Mr. Meri appeared to have won more seats than Mr. Ruutel's leftist Safe Home Alliance. Preliminary parliamentary results given by the election commission said Mr. Meri's conservative Fatherland Alliance finished first with 20.5 per cent of the vote, expected to give it 28 seats in the legislature. The Safe Home Alliance, which includes much of the former Communist establishment and a powerful lobby of industrial leaders, got 13.9 per cent of the vote, or 18 seats.

Vatican, Mexico restore ties

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican and Mexico Monday re-established diplomatic relations broken by the Mexican government more than 130 years ago. "For Mexico, as well as the Holy See, today begins a new chapter under the sign of mutual respect and trust," said a Vatican announcement. President Carlos Salinas de Gortari has moved to improve relations with the church in the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nation since he took office in 1988. In an historic audience with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican last year, he said he hoped to restore formal ties. The Mexican government broke all relations with the Vatican in 1858, after President Benito Juarez nationalised the church's huge property holdings.

Russia to develop disputed islands

TOKYO (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin has decided to designate the Kurile chain, including four Japanese-claimed islands, a region for economic development open to overseas investment, a Japanese daily said Monday. The Asahi Shimbun quoted Governor Valentin Fyodorov of the Sakhalin region, which administers the North Pacific islands, as saying Mr. Yeltsin would sign a decree paving the way for the area to be opened to foreign investors. "The president has agreed to sign a decree for the social and economic development of the Kuriles," Mr. Fyodorov told Asahi in an interview in Sakhalin Sunday. "This shows that the president regards (all) the Kurile Islands as Russian territory," said the governor, who strongly opposes Japanese demands for the return of the islands, it calls the Northern Territories. Japan has refused to offer Russia large-scale economic aid until it gets back the islands seized by Soviet troops at the end of World War II.

Japanese troops arrive in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (AP) — The first Japanese ground troops since World War II to report overseas for duty have landed in Cambodia — proud but feeling the burden of their mission. The troops are to help the United Nations accomplish its most ambitious peacekeeping operation ever. As military observers, they are to help disarm and demobilise Cambodia's 170,000 troops; establish and monitor border checkpoints; and monitor the fragile ceasefire. The operation is aimed at stabilising the country for elections by next May. "I feel a little bit of pressure," said Lt. Col. Yusaku Fukui, the most senior of the eight military observers to arrive. "But that pressure will be changed into pride. We will be able to accomplish our mission."

Thailand's King opens parliament

BANGKOK (R) — Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej opened a new parliament Monday, saying the people had expressed with their votes a desire to live under a democratic system. "This time, the people were conscious of the importance of exercising their right to vote and turned out to vote in big numbers to have good members of parliament to serve the country to create stability for the country and to govern the country according to the democratic system as everyone wishes," he said. Chuan Leekpai, leader of the Democrat Party, will be nominated for prime minister after the lower house elects a speaker Tuesday. Following general elections earlier this month, Mr. Chuan has put together a 207-member coalition in the 360-seat House of Representatives. Most are from parties which oppose the traditional domination of Thai politics by the military.

German extremists attack refugee homes

BERLIN (AP) — Several hundred rightist extremists threw rocks and firebombs at police guarding a home for refugees in the northern city of Wismar, in the sixth straight night of riots there, authorities said Sunday. Police said attacks on homes for asylum-seekers were reported in a dozen other cities in eastern and western Germany over the weekend. In Senftenberg 100 kilometres southeast of Berlin, 80 rightist radicals attacked the local police station with stones and firebombs late Saturday. Seven rioters were taken into custody.

Fire in Brussels kills 8

BRUSSELS (AP) — A fire swept through a stately home in central Brussels early Sunday, killing eight people in their sleep, including five children, officials said. The fire already raged out of control when the fire brigade arrived around 2.30 a.m. (0030 GMT), making it impossible to enter the four-story house and get the people out in time. When most of the fire had been extinguished more than an hour later, firefighters found the eight victims, dead by asphyxiation, on the building's third floor. The cause of the fire was under investigation.

COLUMN

Belgians win trans-Atlantic balloon race

LONDON (R) — Two Belgians soared across the Portuguese coast Monday to win the first-ever trans-Atlantic balloon race, the organisers said Monday. A Dutch team's hopes of finishing second fell apart when bad weather forced them to seek help from a rescue team ashore. They said they planned to ditch into the sea when help arrived. "We are pretty excited to be first in the race. We are very thrilled and we thank everybody who made this happen," the organisers quoted Wim Verstraeten of the Belgian team as saying after he crossed the Portuguese coast. As he and team-mate Bertrand Piccard looked for a safe landing spot in better light, the Dutch were awaiting the arrival of French coastal rescue vessels before ditching in the Bay of Biscay. Piccard and Verstraeten selected race controllers in Rotterdam to confirm their victory at 0130 GMT after 115 hours aloft on a journey of 2,580 miles (4,130 km). The organisers said earlier that teams from Britain and the United States were lying third and fourth. A German team ditched in the Atlantic Saturday evening after being overtaken by bad weather and began running short of fuel.

Robbery victim escapes with nothing but socks

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A man forced at knifepoint to give up his car and remove his clothes was left at an intersection Saturday wearing only his socks, police said. The man walked to a gasoline station, where he was given a plastic garbage bag to wear as he waited for police, said Sgt. Mike Sonntag. Sgt. Sonntag said the man was forced from his car as he waited at a stop light along a boulevard in the San Fernando Valley north of the city. Two men approached the car and one put a knife to the man's neck, ordered him from the car and forced him to remove his clothing. The robbers then took the clothing and drove away in the car. The man was driven home by police.

Woman exhumes husband's body 'to enjoy the sun'

KAMPALA (R) — A Ugandan woman exhumes her husband's corpse and takes it home "to enjoy the sunshine" every morning, the Star newspaper reported. The paper quoted her as saying her husband, buried a year ago, had appeared to her in a dream lamenting that it was chilly in the grave and requesting to be dug up for a "warming sun." "Each day whenever the sun rises, the widow gets the corpse out to bask and returns it after a considerable period," the star reported.

Cash-strapped town disbands police department

CLARKSBURG, Mass. (AP) — This cash-strapped mountain town has disbanded its six-officer Police Department because of a lack of money. "We're out of funds," said town official Edward Denault. He said the lone police cruiser needs repairs and the officers require training that the town can't afford. Since May, town residents have voted three times to reject overrides of the state tax cap to help fund local schools and government departments. The town's police officers, unpaid for three months, finally resigned en masse in June but returned a month later when a private donor gave \$1,000 for their wages. Another \$1,000 of town reserve money extended their service. But town officials laid off the entire part-time department Friday.

Curiosity almost kills cat owner

TAMPA, Florida (R) — If cats have nine lives, then Kyle Thompson now owes his pet one. The 16-year-old was in fair condition Friday in hospital after being shot in the back by the friendly feline, who jumped onto his bed, accidentally discharged a gun lying there. Hillsborough County Sheriff's Deputies say Thompson used his .22-calibre rifle earlier in the day and removed the ammunition clip when he put in on his bed. Unfortunately, he forgot to extract the single bullet still in the gun's chamber. As best as authorities can figure, the cat jumped on the bed and landed on the gun, which discharged the single bullet into the teenager's lower back.

ANC: Government not committed to peace

JOHANNESBURG (R) — The African National Congress (ANC) accused the government Monday of delaying agreements which could lead to the resumption of democracy talks, saying it cast doubt on Pretoria's commitment to peace.

ANC spokeswoman Gill Marcus said negotiators were struggling to keep on track preparations for a summit between ANC leader Nelson Mandela and reformist President F.W. de Klerk.

"The government is stalling. They are refusing to get to grips with issues that need to be ironed out before the Mandela-de Klerk summit and negotiations as a whole," she told Reuters.

Mr. de Klerk invited Mr. Man-

del for talks after troops in the

nominal independent homeland of Ciskei killed 28 ANC demonstrators on Sept. 7.

The ANC withdrew from multi-party democracy negotiations in June, accusing the state of failing to curb township violence in which more than 13,000 blacks have died in the past eight years.

"The key issues are: The release of all political prisoners, the banning of dangerous weapons in public. The government has not moved on these issues. This is a serious indictment of the government's commitment to peace," Ms. Marcus added.

But the government Sunday

accused the ANC of resisting reasonable proposals on freedom

for political prisoners, a key stumbling block to democracy talks.

"It was the ANC that was unresponsive to the reasonable call that all parties be treated on equal terms regarding the release of prisoners and the handling of relevant offenders," said a joint statement by Justice Minister Kibie Coetsee and chief negotiator Roelf Meyer.

They rejected as inaccurate a newspaper report that Mr. Coetsee had wrecked a deal paving the way for the summit.

The Sunday Times said a deal brokered by Mr. Meyer and ANC Secretary-General Cyril Ramaphosa had been within an ace of approval by both sides Friday.

Convoy problem casts doubt on Sarajevo airlift

SARAJEVO (R) — Two United Nations convoys failed to get through at the weekend, casting fresh doubts on hopes of resuming the vital airlift to Sarajevo, sources close to the U.N. said.

They told Reuters a 10-truck convoy carrying supplies to Srebrenica, a Muslim-held town northeast of Sarajevo, had been turned back at checkpoints two days after setting out from the capital.

A convoy to Sarajevo due to leave the Croatian port of Split Monday had also been cancelled, and a relief mission to Jajce, northwest of the Bosnian capital in Croat-held Herzegovina, was also in doubt, the sources added.

Sarajevo itself was relatively quiet Monday morning, after heavy mortar fire of the northern localities of Dolac and Pofalici before midnight.

Bosnian Radio said the western suburbs of Stup and Nedarici, scenes of heavy fighting last week, were also shelled.

Elsewhere in the republic, the radio reported three Serb air attacks on Novi Travnik, 100 km northwest of Sarajevo and said four people had been killed and 13 injured in shelling at Gradacac in northern Bosnia.

There was no confirmation or no new reports from the Serbian side.

The difficulties encountered by the convoys came despite the weekend agreement by all sides in the conflict not to interfere with them.

This was part of a deal brokered by U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata intended to restart the airlift of supplies to Sarajevo as soon as Tuesday and to boost the land routes before the winter makes movement difficult.

A strengthened U.N. force is due to be deployed next month to protect the airport and the land routes.

Members will be mandated to use force against any side which tries to prevent the aid getting through.

But Western governments are

reluctant to become involved in Bosnia unless the assurances of cooperation from the Muslim-Croat government and their Serb foes hold.

Mrs. Ogata admitted security was not satisfactory for the flights, which earlier averaged 18 a day carrying 200 tonnes, but said this was outweighed by the urgent need to build up supplies for Sarajevo with winter now only weeks away.

Monday brings the planned resumption of peace talks in Geneva. The only apparent success there so far has been the leaders' agreement with the UNHCR.

The Bosnian Serbs' attitude is likely to have been hardened by the Security Council's weekend recommendation to bar Yugoslavia, their chief ally.

Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Panic has flown to New York hoping to address the U.N. General Assembly and head off the moves against Yugoslavia, which now consists only of Serbia and Montenegro.

In an impassioned address to his fellow Serbs before leaving Belgrade, Mr. Panic said his goals were to end the U.N.-imposed oil and trade embargo and return Yugoslavia to the world community.

"It is clear to us that we cannot declare war against the whole world, but it is also clear to us that we must preserve our national dignity," he said on television before leaving.

But it was not clear whether Mr. Panic will be allowed to address the assembly. Leaders of Bosnia's three warring parties, having achieved little visible progress at the peace conference in Geneva, said they planned to leave Monday evening and let lower-level negotiators carry on the talks.

Haris Silajdzic, foreign minister of the Muslim-led government in the former Yugoslav Republic, was due to fly to the U.N. in New York, while Serb leader Radovan Karadzic planned to leave after an afternoon session with international mediators.

Police say fatal Canadian mine blast was murder

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (R) — Police said Sunday they believe an underground explosion that killed nine men at a strike-torn Arctic gold mine was a result of sabotage and they are considering the deaths as murders.

They said explosives investigators had determined sabotage at the mine in Yellowknife was the cause of the blast which happened Friday while the miners were being taken to the work face in a rail car.

A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) spokesman said the explosion in a tunnel at the 750-foot (230-metre) level of the mine came from the side of the rail track and not from within the car itself.

"As a result of this information and the fact that the blast was deliberately set, the police are treating this as a multiple murder," Corporal Dave Grundy said in an interview.

Six explosives investigators from Ottawa and five major crimes specialists from Edmon-

ton, Alberta, were looking through the rubble, along with Northwest Territories government mine safety officials.

Earlier Sunday, the union representing striking workers at the mine urged an independent inquiry into the explosion, saying the police were incapable of doing a fair job.

The Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers said the RCMP had been prejudiced against the union since 240 union workers went on strike on May 23 in a labour dispute.

The union said 110 of its members had faced charges, ranging from mischief to arson, in the past four months. Only six company employees had been charged.

"That goes to show the treatment we've been getting ... we want an independent, public inquiry to find out exactly what happened here," said union Vice-President Rick Cassidy.

Yellowknife, a mining and government centre, is the largest city in the Northwest Territories.

Ships blaze, no signs of life in Malacca Strait

JAKARTA (R) — Twenty-nine crew members are missing after Sunday's collision between a container ship and a tanker in the Malacca Strait and the two vessels remain engulfed in flames, an Indonesian official said Monday.

The official of the government's search and Rescue Department in western Indonesia's Medan town said the body of one crew member had been recovered and 16 others were rescued Sunday from the ships after they collided shortly after midnight, about 10 nautical miles off Indonesia's Sumatra Island.

He said an Indonesian Navy aircraft had flown over the accident scene and reported the 96,000-tonne Liberian-registered Nagasaki Spirit and the 27,000-tonne Panamanian-registered container ship Ocean-Blessing were still ablaze.

"The plane did not see any crew in the waters around the ships," he added.

An Indonesian naval officer said oil was gushing out of the side of the tanker.

"We have seen an oil slick and fear it may pollute the Malacca Strait," he said.

The Indonesian navy plans to use three vessels to tow the tanker to the north Sumatra port of Belawan.

It rejected suggestions that pirates could have been involved in the collision.

"This is purely an accident between both of the ships and not caused by pirates," the officer said.

Jaffar Hassan, assistant shore officer in Malaysia's Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC), said Sunday that the tanker captain reported his vessel had been fired on.

Robberies and violence by hit-and-run pirates on commercial vessels around Singapore, the world's busiest port, have been reported with increasing frequency in recent years.

The Ocean-Blessing had a crew of 21 — eight from Hong Kong, one Malaysian, one Taiwanese and 11 ratings from China.

The tanker had a crew of 25. A U.S. embassy spokesman in Singapore said two Sea Knight helicopters from the U.S. Navy store ship Niagara Falls, carrying provisions for vessels from the Seventh Fleet, had given up the search which they mounted last night.

Number of hungry in the world is falling — U.N.

WASHINGTON (R) — Despite devastating famine in Somalia and the threat of widespread food shortages throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of hungry people in the world is falling steadily, the United Nations said Sunday.

The U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in a new report said the number of hungry people in developing nations dropped by 155 million over the past two decades — even though the world's population climbed by almost 2 billion.

Twenty per cent of people in developing nations go to bed hungry today, compared to 36 per cent in the early 1960s. But that still leaves 786 million underfed people — including about 200 million children who suffer from malnutrition.

"Famine and malnutrition are still the most devastating problems facing the majority of the world's poor. Adequate supplies of safe, good food must be available at prices people can afford," FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma said.

The United States separately has said sub-Saharan nations with a total population of over 100 million are threatened by drought-caused food shortages in coming months.

Civil war and food shortages in Somalia have led to acute famine

in that nation, complicating relief efforts and leaving 1.5 million people in immediate danger of starving to death.

The United States suspended relief efforts to the Somali city of Belet Hm Friday after a U.S. cargo plane was hit by ground fire.

"There are cyclical problems. Civil strife in Somalia and Sudan have dried up food supplies. Our priority continues to be Africa, because they are the continent with the greatest problem," said John Lupien, director of FAO's Food Policy and Nutrition Division.

Better seeds, cropping techniques and government food policies allowed farmers to keep pace with a 1.8 billion world population increase since 1961-63, the U.N. report said.

Wheat production increased about 4 per cent a year in developing nations, while rice output increased about 2 per cent — increasing supplies and lowering prices.

Average food availability rose from 2,290 calories per person per day in 1961-63 to 2,700 calories in 1988-90.

But a number of critical problems remain, the U.N. said.

About 2 billion people still lack key nutrients in their diet, which can lead to serious diseases and retardation.